

[School of the Crane](#) is located, all bear his name.

Eyes	Blue
Skin	Pale with freckles
Political Information	
Profession	Author (later in his life) Cartographer Clerk (formerly) Explorer Scholar
Affiliation	Giancardi Bank School of the Griffin Tubiel's Hanza Kingdom of Lyria and Rivia Kai Yih's Pirate Confederation School of the Dragon (as a ally) Kingdom of Kovir Duke Falmak's Amikuk Hunting Team
Alias(es)	The Younger Junior
Nationality	Temerian
Relationships	
Father	Fabio Sachs (senior)
Mother	Mirna Sachs
Sibling(s)	Paula Sachs Irene Sachs Luis Sachs
Lover(s)	Erin Oswa Aep Led (wife)
Other	Putnam Pitch (best friend / godfather of his daughters and son) Putnam Sachs (son) Tubiel Sachs (daughter) Heda Sachs (daughter) Canata Sachs (daughter)



 Contents	[hide]
1. Biography	
1.1. Early life (1252 - 1267)	
1.2. Meeting Ciri (1267)	
1.3. Meeting Istredd (1270)	
1.4. Third Northen War (1272)	
1.5. Meeting Putnam Pitch (November, 1275)	
1.6. Marriage (1276)	
1.7. In search of funding for his Far East Expedition (December, 1276)	
1.8. Almost a reality (Summer of 1279)	
1.9. Putnam and Tubiel's Wedding (January 1280)	
1.9.1. Participation in the rescue of Putnam (Late January 1280 - late May 1280)	
1.9.2. Taking care of the witcher (June of 1280)	
1.9.3. Putnam's physical recovery	
1.10. Tubiel's Funeral (June 15, 1280)	
1.11. Discussion and separation (mid - June of 1280)	
1.12. Saved by Jolanta Dinmarb during his journey to Lyria (September of 1281)	

- 1.13. Reunion and apologies from both (September of 1281)
- 1.14. Celebration in honor of the Expedition of Fabio Sachs to the Far East (end of 1281)
- 1.15. Expedition to the Far East (1282 - 1285)
 - 1.15.1. The first year of the expedition
 - 1.15.2. Winter in Kilan-Tal (Haakland) (Winter of 1282)
 - 1.15.3. In search of mythical realms (early 1283)
 - 1.15.3.1. Valkare
 - 1.15.3.2. Oponskoye
 - 1.15.3.3. Eastern Barsa
 - 1.15.3.4. Hannu
- 1.16. 布延 (Bùyán), the land of the Dragon Kings (late spring / early summer of 1283)
 - 1.16.1. The end of the Dreki Tyranny
- 1.17. Zerzura, The White City (summer of 1283)
 - 1.17.1. The Slaves Revenge
 - 1.17.2. The kingdom of Ketu Rahu (September 20 - November 20, 1283)
- 1.18. Tuyotuki Islands (December, 1283 - December, 1284)
 - 1.18.1. The Tuyotukian Civil War / Investigating the murder of the Emperor
 - 1.18.2. Tawalisi
 - 1.18.2.1. Tawarisi
 - 1.18.2.2. Journey through the rest of the islands
 - 1.18.2.3. D'yaebi's death
 - 1.18.2.4. Solving the conflict and cleaning their name
- 1.19. Return from the Far East (December 1284 - May 1285)
 - 1.19.1. Stopover in Sabana to replenish supplies (March - April 1285)
- 1.20. The Return and Preparation for New Horizons (April 1285 -March 1286)
- 1.21. Expedition to the Far North (1286 - 1288)
 - 1.21.1. The Amikuks Hunt of Vinland (Summer of 1286)
 - 1.21.2. Heluland, The Land of Flat Stones (Late Summer - Early Autumn of 1286)
 - 1.21.2.1. More Blood For The Flat Stones
 - 1.21.3. Winter in Inis Kharab (Late December of 1286, Mid - February of 1287)
 - 1.21.4. The Threat of the Ice Giants (Mid - Spring - End of the Summer of 1287)
 - 1.21.5. "Cold Roses" (Autumn - Winter of 1287)
 - 1.21.6. The Frozen Utopia (Winter of 1287 - Spring of 1288)
 - 1.21.6.1. Reaching the End (Spring of 1288)
 - 1.21.7. The Dead Lands (Summer of 1288)
 - 1.21.7.1. Among the Glacier Folk
- 1.22. After the expedition to the Far North / Settlement period (1288-1302)
- 1.23. Planning the final expedition (1300)
2. Last voyage and death (March 11, 1302 - September

5, 1306)

2.1. The four years in the Silk Islands

2.2. The Last Embrace with Putnam

3. Personality

4. Legacy

5. Image credits

6. Gallery



Biography

Early life (1252 - 1267)

Fabio Sachs was born on July 18, 1252, as the youngest brother of four, having two older sisters named Paula and Irene and one older brother named Luis, respectively, in the bustling port city of Gors Velen in [Temeria](#), one of the most influential trade cities on the west, located on the coast of the North Sea. He hailed from a family deeply rooted in trade and finance, with his mother, Mirna Sachs serving as a clerk at the Giancardi Bank and his father, Fabio Sachs senior, being an influential merchant responsible for importing products from distant lands such as [Hannu](#) and [Ofir](#). Growing up in Gors Velen exposed him to tales of distant lands and exotic cultures from overseas traders passing through the city, fostering in young Fabio a keen interest in the unknown and a burning curiosity about the world beyond the Northern Kingdoms.

At a very young age, Fabio entered the aforementioned bank as a clerk, initially assisting Molnar Giancardi and later taking on various responsibilities. Fabio spent several years working at the bank, diligently performing his duties. However, fate eventually presented him with an opportunity that put him on his way to become the explorer he would be.

Meeting Ciri (1267)

In June [1267](#), while working at the bank, Fabio was tasked by Molnar Giancardi to guide the young girl [Ciri](#) around the city, to keep her busy while [Yennefer](#) and Molnar spoke. At first, while going down Kardo Street, they saw [The Unlaced Corset](#) and the town hall. After they went through the [fish market](#) and viewed Thanedd Island from the city walls, Fabio treated Ciri to some doughnuts from the marketplace and they wandered around, taking in the sights and wares. He told Ciri of his keen desire to travel the world and Ciri's innate magical ability foresaw that he would, indeed, become a great and famous explorer, though she didn't tell him so. When they happened upon a fake "basilisk" on display, he proved a loyal friend to Ciri by not telling of how it was actually she that killed the wyvern after it broke out and not the squire as everyone believed. Despite his efforts, the crowd blamed Ciri for angering the creature and so the two were forced to flee, running into [Tissaia de Vries](#) and [Margarita Laux-Antille](#), who believed her a novice of nearby [Aretuza](#). Tissaia put a paralysing spell on Ciri while Fabio attempted to help, stopped by Margarita. After Fabio revealed her identity, they all went back to

the bank, and while Ciri spoke with the sorceresses, Molnar lectured Fabio for getting her into trouble.

This event caused Fabio to have a certain antipathy towards mages for a long time, until he met Istredd. Although the Koviri made him change his mind, the explorer always had a favoritism for the witchers, which was reflected in his friendship with Putnam Pitch.

Meeting Istredd (1270)

As he reached the age of seventeen and after much effort to convince his father, Fabio was sent to study at Oxenfurt Academy, where he pursued a double degree in archaeology and geography. This decision marked a pivotal moment in Fabio's life, setting him on the path to fulfill his dreams of exploration and discovery. So, by September of that same year, he entered the Faculty of Applied Archaeology and the Faculty of History and Geography. In the former, he ended up meeting the mage Istredd, who was acting as a substitute for Professor [Vairmont Jonne](#), who, at the time, was ill. There, the mage and future explorer, initially as a teacher and student, developed a strong friendship through various classes, bonded by their shared interests in the history of the world and the desire to uncover the secrets beyond their lands.

This friendship endured even when Istredd had to leave due to Gustavo's recovery. They maintained their connection through letters and occasional in-person visits. Eventually, Istredd would join Fabio's expeditions, becoming one of his key members, along with the already mentioned Griffin Witcher.

Third Northern War (1272)

At some point in 1272, as part of his archeology undergraduate thesis, Fabio would publish a map of the Pontar Delta, Velen, [Kaer Morhen valley](#), and Skellige based on scripts he found in the Oxenfurt Academy archives. For this work, he would receive an excellent grade, though not a perfect score, and finish his studies in archeology. However, he continued his studies in geography at the same institution, as he had failed several subjects and fallen two years behind. This setback, though an obstacle for the future explorer, unknowingly led him to eventually meet his best friend three years later.

This map would become, the first and one of many he would make throughout his life, based on information from others and, later, from his journeys.

Meeting Putnam Pitch (November, 1275)

"Emerging from the sewers, I shared my woes about the lost thesis with Putnam. He listened with genuine sympathy, a quality I hadn't expected from a witcher."

—Fabio Sachs, Life beyond the Fiery Mountains (autobiography)

It was at the end of 1275, more specifically, in the month of November, that Fabio Sachs would meet one of the most important people in his life, who would later become his best friend, accompanying him on his travels to the [Far East](#), [Far North](#), and in the discovery of the Western Continent respectively – the [School of the Griffin](#) witcher, and in the future, one of the founders of the [School of the Crane](#), [Putnam Pitch](#). This happened during the final stages of completing his master's thesis for graduation as a geographer, with Fabio enduring a dreadful day filled with a stomach ache and restless sleep. Returning to his residence in Oxenfurt to meticulously review the thesis for perfection, he faced yet another setback as it unexpectedly flew out of his grasp, propelled by an unforeseen gust of wind, adding to his misfortunes.

Yet, unbeknownst to Fabio, this seemingly disastrous day would conclude on a positive note, presenting him with the unexpected delight of meeting his future best friend. Navigating the sewers to retrieve his lost thesis, Fabio found himself in a perilous situation. The disconcerting sounds of scuffling and snarling echoed through the subterranean passages as a group of wererats emerged from the shadows, closing in on him. Filled with terror, Fabio valiantly attempted to fend off the wererats, skillfully dodging and blocking their attacks. Despite his efforts, it became evident that he was no match for them, quickly succumbing to being overwhelmed.

Just when he thought all hope was lost, a figure emerged from the darkness, brandishing a silver sword. It was none other than Putnam, who, after dealing with a gang, stumbled upon the wererats by chance. Putnam swiftly dispatched the monsters, saving Fabio from certain death. After the battle, Fabio, gasping for breath and still trembling from the adrenaline rush, felt lucky to be alive and grateful to Putnam for his professionalism.

As they emerged from the sewers, they began to strike up a conversation, catching their breath. Fabio lamented about losing his thesis, sharing how much work he had put into it and how he had hoped to finish it soon. Putnam listened attentively and sympathized with his plight.

Deciding to celebrate their survival, they headed to a nearby tavern as the night wore on. As they shared stories and laughter, enjoying each other's company, Fabio was surprised at how easy it was to talk to Putnam and how much he enjoyed his company. Despite being a solitary person, content with his books and research, something about Putnam drew him out of his shell.

Leaving the tavern as the dawn approached, they both realized they had been talking and drinking for hours. They exchanged contact information and made plans to meet up again. What neither of them knew at the time was that this encounter would mark the beginning of a long and lasting friendship that would transform the continent forever.

Marriage (1276)

The following year, after the rejection from the Koviri crown, Fabio continued his quest for funding. Following his visit to the court of Ebbing, which initially showed interest but ultimately rejected the proposal for his Far East expedition, Fabio fell in love and eventually got married, despite feeling pressured by his in-laws. His chosen life partner was Erin Oswa Aep Led, a vedyminaica whom he met shortly after leaving the court of [Ebbing](#). They encountered each other as he was leaving, and she was entering to present a proposal to investigate the castle of Stygga, with Fabio accidentally bumping into her. Erin, although blind, didn't deter Fabio, who was captivated by her personality. Conversely, Erin fell in love with Fabio's active personality and the beauty she found in his voice.

Having known Putnam, Fabio promised Erin that one day he would introduce her to a witcher, given her enthusiasm for collecting witcher artifacts. He was sure she would be thrilled to meet one in person, as she had never encountered a witcher before.

This marriage was crucial in Fabio's pursuit of his dreams. With the support of his in-laws, who believed that Fabio's proposal would bring long-term benefits to everyone, they served as assistance to the still-not-yet-established explorer, exerting pressure that, as mentioned earlier, eventually persuaded the crown of Lyria & Rivia to accept his proposal, thereby allowing the expedition to take place.

From this union, several children were born, individuals with some relevance during the 14th century, although not as prominent as their father. One notable example is the multitiered Putnam Sachs.

In search of funding for his Far East Expedition (December, 1276) ✦

By December of 1276, Fabio Sachs had finally graduated as a geographer. Eager to traverse the world and fueled by great ambition, he embarked on the first phase of what would later evolve into his journey to the Far East. Traveling from kingdom to kingdom, his goal was to find someone willing to finance his ambitious idea. His vision involved mapping the entire continent to optimize trade routes, a task that demanded expensive expeditions.

Despite an unsuccessful meeting with the Koviri Crown in [Lan Exeter](#), Fabio remained undeterred, pressing on in his quest. An encounter with his friend Putnam in the city rekindled his motivation. During a subsequent meeting with Putnam, Fabio also bore witness to the reconciliation of the witcher with one of his life's loves, [Tubiel of Brenna](#). Tubiel would later become a close friend of Fabio, playing a pivotal role in the initially robust but eventually profound friendship between Putnam and him.

After attending the reunion and, in some way, contributing to the reconciliation, Fabio returned to his hometown Gors Velen, which served as his launching point to resume his journey in pursuit of funding for his first expedition after the winter. His endeavors eventually led him to the Crown of Lyria and Rivia, where he successfully secured the much-needed funding for his initial expedition.

Almost a reality (Summer of 1279) ✦

It took several years of traveling through the Northern Realms and some vassal states of [Nilfgaard](#), coupled with the support of his political family, for Fabio to finally secure the funding that would allow him to undertake his journey to the Far East. This finally happened in the year 1279. The subsequent years were dedicated to addressing bureaucratic issues and preparing for the monumental undertaking that would mark a before and after in Nordling history. There were also some delays due to the events in which Fabio would become involved the following year.

The conversations with the by-then already elderly queen Meve were tough and intense. Meve, though interested in the potential wealth that this venture could bring to Lyria & Rivia, remained skeptical due to its high risks. However, the prospect of leaving a full treasury to her successor, ensuring the kingdom wouldn't suffer hardships, or could defend itself adequately in case of invasion (remembering the effectiveness of Kovir's mercenary army), ultimately persuaded her.

During this preparatory period and prior to the already mentioned events, Fabio reunited with Putnam, who was returning from [Ofir](#) and [Zangyebar](#). This encounter, reminiscent of the one they have in 1276, not only further fueled the determination of the aspiring explorer but also strengthened the bond between them. With the events that transpired during the subsequent year, this connection would deepen even more, as Putnam and Fabio experienced significant occurrences that would profoundly influence both lives, solidifying their shared journey and marking a significant chapter in each of their personal stories.

Putnam and Tubiel's Wedding (January 1280) ✦

In January 1280, Fabio received an invitation from his best friend, Putnam Pitch, to attend his wedding with Tubiel of Brenna. The wedding was to be held at the Griffins' fortress, Kaer Seren, a place of significant meaning for the couple as they had met there as children. Fabio eagerly accepted the invitation, although his wife Erin had to stay behind due to pressing family matters.

The wedding took place on January 27, 1280, on the private beach of the fortress.

The ceremony was intimate, with only a few guests in attendance. Fabio was one of the few invited, alongside Putnam's friends and brother figure, Putnam and Tubiel's adopted son, Sigurd, [Caldigi](#), a former member of the School of the Cat and member of the [School of the Fox](#), akin to a big brother figure for Tubiel and [Velcal](#), the grandmaster of the School of the Fox. The couple exchanged vows under a simple arch adorned with white flowers, with the sound of the ocean providing a serene backdrop.

Fabio cherished this rare opportunity to celebrate with Putnam and Tubiel, witnessing their joy and the deep bond they shared. However, the joyous occasion was abruptly shattered when Mimit, Putnam's estranged brother and a vengeful mage, attacked during the banquet. Mimit, seeking revenge against Tubiel for dismantling his grand project, kidnapped Putnam, leaving behind chaos and casualties.

Caught off guard, Fabio and the witchers fought valiantly but were unable to prevent Mimit's escape with Putnam.

Participation in the rescue of Putnam (Late January 1280 - late May 1280)

The sudden attack during Putnam and Tubiel's wedding, orchestrated by his estranged brother Mimit, left Fabio Sachs and the other guests in shock. As Mimit kidnapped Putnam, Fabio found himself entangled in a desperate mission to rescue his best friend. The attack, as already mentioned, resulted in casualties, including the tragic death of Velcal, the grandmaster of the School of the Fox, marking a dark chapter for both the School of the Griffin and the School of the Fox, as well as for Fabio.

After the initial chaos, a search and rescue team was quickly organized, spearheaded by Tubiel. Fabio, deeply committed to rescuing Putnam, volunteered without hesitation. The team also included Putnam's friends [Kemro](#) and Zivor, his middle brother figure Vargas, and other guests such as Caldigi and [Jezkier](#). They sought the assistance of the druids of the Circle of Mayena, who, after the reconstruction of the School of the Griffin, had helped the witchers with the mutation process, to trace the remnants of the portal used by Mimit. Unfortunately, time was against them, and the trail had grown faint. The druids could only provide a vague indication that Putnam was likely being held somewhere in Gheso, Maecht, or Magne. Tubiel decided to avoid using magical means to prevent potential ambushes, opting for a longer but safer journey.

During the first month of Putnam's captivity, he struggled to maintain his sanity, facing both physical and psychological torture as Mimit used him for experiments. Fabio, meanwhile, along with the rescue team, traversed the challenging terrain, determined to save him. Putnam's resilience was tested as he endured Mimit's relentless torment, but a spark of hope remained within him.

The rescue team faced numerous obstacles, but their unwavering resolve kept them moving forward. They navigated treacherous landscapes and dealt with the constant threat of being discovered by Mimit's spies. Fabio, motivated by his deep bond with Putnam, pushed through the hardships, his mind focused on the mission.

By May 30th of 1280, Putnam was on the brink of collapse, his spirit nearly broken. Yet, his hope for rescue had not entirely faded. The rescue team, now closer than ever, finally managed to locate him. Their timely intervention thwarted Mimit's plans and saved Putnam from a fate worse than death.

For four long and harrowing months, Tubiel and the team tirelessly searched for Putnam. Their quest was fraught with dead ends and retraced steps, punctuated by brief moments of respite, such as their stay in Erin's old house. Despite these fleeting breaks, frustration and desperation continued to mount. However, after

all their efforts, they finally identified two potential locations where Putnam might be held captive.

As for Sigurd, the son of the couple in Kaer Seren, he did not stay put, fully aware of the situation. Just before the team set off south, the red-haired boy, with the grace and stealth of a cat, managed to slip into the carriage that Fabio had used to come to Kaer Seren (which the team borrowed for the rescue). They only discovered the stowaway when they were already far from Kaer Seren, on a ship at sea. Though Sigurd received a stern scolding, it was clear he only wanted to help find his father, not fully grasping the danger. Given the circumstances, the team decided to let him stay, as returning was not an option.

The two potential locations were Darn Viesser, a citadel by Lake Loc Lebar, and Kasteel Saar, ancient ruins near the Korath Desert, both in Magne. Unsure of Putnam's exact whereabouts, the team split up. Fabio and Sigurd were to investigate the citadel in Viesser, while Tubiel, Kemro, Zivor, Jezkier, Vargos, and Caldigi ventured to the ruins. They planned to regroup in Viesser, hopeful for a swift resolution.

As Fabio and Sigurd approached Darn Viesser, anxiety welled up in Fabio. The bustling city and fortified citadel were unknown entities. By dusk, they had gathered some information about the citadel's rulers but nothing conclusive. Their hope now lay with the others' success.

Tubiel's group reached Kasteel Saar as night fell. The ruins were heavily guarded by mercenaries and errant knights hired by Mimit. After observing for hours, they were almost certain Putnam was there. Formulating a solid escape plan, they assessed the terrain and the skills of each member. However, even the best-laid plans can fail.

Jezkier's distraction plan went disastrously wrong. His nerves gave him away, leading to a fatal scuffle. Zivor, in a valiant but ultimately doomed attempt to save him, also perished. The group was forced to mourn their losses and rethink their approach.

Blinded by grief, Kemro consumed several witcher potions and charged into battle, creating a fierce distraction. His actions allowed Vargos, Caldigi, and Tubiel to slip past the chaos, but Kemro, like Zivor, was overwhelmed by the enemy's numbers and fell in combat.

Deep within the ruins, they found Putnam in a stark, sterile room, suspended by dimerite chains. His physical state bore testament to months of torture, his mind fractured. Tubiel's guilt and determination fueled her as she freed him. In her arms, Putnam began to regain his senses, realizing his rescue was not a dream.

Meanwhile, Sigurd, impatient and determined, while Fabio was sleeping, overheard a group of this mercenaries hired by Mimit discussing Kasteel Saar and snuck into one of their carriages, unknowingly heading towards further danger.

Vargos, Tubiel, Caldigi, and Putnam faced their most challenging task: escape. They discovered an ancient sewer system but encountered Mimit. Vargos sacrificed himself to buy time, fighting valiantly before being overwhelmed by Mimit's magical abilities and magical weapons, with fiery magical arrows, which set the ruins and Vargos ablaze.

As they reached the main entrance, reinforcements blocked their path. Caldigi, realizing the gravity of the situation, engaged the enemies, ultimately succumbing to the flames but ensuring Putnam and Tubiel's escape.

Just when it seemed they had escaped, Mimit appeared. He reduced Sigurd to ashes with a devastating spell and swiftly killed Tubiel, leaving Putnam to witness

the horror, powerless to intervene. Mimit declared Putnam a "failed project" before disappearing, leaving him broken and alone.

Putnam, shattered by the loss of his loved ones and the ordeal he endured, remained in the arid landscape of Magne, weeping and broken, his future forever altered by the harrowing events.

Taking care of the witcher (June of 1280)

Upon awakening, Fabio was struck with extreme alarm when he discovered Sigurd's absence. He was well aware of the boy's independent nature, yet, he had hoped that after those four months with him and the rest of the team, he would have understood the gravity of the situation and stayed under his command.

On that day, the explorer didn't even bother with breakfast. Driven by the fear that something terrible may have happened to the young redhead, he began scouring the city in search of him. He searched tirelessly throughout Viesser for the entire morning and well into the afternoon, but Sigurd was nowhere to be found. Frustration and worry gnawed at him as he scoured every corner, questioning anyone who might have seen the young redhead. The weight of responsibility settled heavily on his shoulders, knowing that he had failed in his duty to keep Sigurd safe.

Exhausted and disheartened, Fabio decided to take a brief respite and grabbed a quick lunch in a tavern. As he sat there, his mind preoccupied with thoughts of the missing boy, a dreadful realization slowly dawned on him. None of the team members assigned to the ruins had returned either. The gravity of the situation hit him like a thunderbolt, sending a surge of adrenaline through his veins.

Rising from his seat, Fabio abandoned his unfinished meal and leaped to his feet, his sense of urgency overriding his hunger. He dashed out of the tavern and sprinted toward the carriage they used, heading for Kasteel Saar. With every step, a mix of determination, fear, and hope coursed through him, as he prayed that he would find Sigurd and the rest of the team unharmed.

Upon his arrival, Fabio was confronted with a sight he could never have fathomed, not even in his darkest nightmares. Despite the initial signs, as he drew nearer, he attempted to brush them aside and maintain a positive outlook. The acrid stench of charred remains filled the air, but he convinced himself that it was merely the aftermath of a fierce battle, and that his friends would be there, encamped near the ruins, recuperating from their injuries.

However, cruelly mirroring Putnam's four months of torment, reality dealt a devastating blow to Fabio's optimism. With each passing moment, his hope dissolved like smoke, swiftly replaced by the chilling truth that unfolded before his eyes—a scene of unspeakable horror and tragedy. The ruins had endured a devastating fire, leaving them as black as coal, and the descending evening only heightened the grimness of the scene. The sight struck him, but he still tried to cling to his optimism. It was only when he started scanning the surroundings and drawing closer that he saw the truth. The area was littered with corpses—some untouched by the flames, remnants of previous battles, he presumed, while others lay charred, likely victims of a soft version of powerful Signs like Igni. Neither Sigurd nor his companions were anywhere to be found. Dreadful thoughts flooded Fabio's mind, and without a second thought, he began searching for them.

As each minute passed, confirming more of his fears, Fabio felt overwhelmed by grief. Amidst the charred ruins, he discovered the medallions once worn by Kemro, Zivor, Vargos, and Caldigi. Still, there was no sign of Sigurd, leading Fabio to presume that he had also perished in the fire (a thought that proved to be pretty accurate). Silent tears streamed down Fabio's face as he mourned the loss of the people whom he had come to appreciate during their four months

together.

His thoughts immediately turned to Putnam. All they had endured, all the sacrifices they had made, had been for the witcher. Was he still alive? Would Fabio be forced to mourn the loss of his best friend as well? Fueled by this thought, Fabio frantically searched the area, his mind filled with desperation. It wasn't until he was returning to the carriage, frustrated and resigned to the idea that Putnam was gone, that he noticed a faint trace of familiarity in one of the bodies. It was Putnam, tightly embracing Tubiel with an unwavering grip born out of immense pain.

Overwhelmed with relief, Fabio rushed to check if they were still alive, even if only barely. He first attended to Tubiel, but the sight of the dried blood surrounding them and her visible wound shattered his hopes. Silently, Fabio shed more tears, mourning both the affection he held for her and the regret that their journey had ended in such tragedy. Turning his attention to Putnam, he fervently prayed that he would not have to endure another loss. Miraculously, his prayers were answered as the weakened witcher clung to life on the precipice of death. Fabio let out a sigh of relief, summoning every ounce of strength he had left, and with a heavy heart, he carefully lifted the lifeless body of Tubiel and the fragile form of Putnam, determined to remove them from this horrific place. It was the least he could do.

After that, Putnam's recovery and his place in history would come. A physical recovery that wouldn't take long, and a mental one that would take so long to complete that it would shape his life and destiny forever.

Putnam's physical recovery 🏠

"Watching Putnam fight through his physical and emotional recovery reminded me that some wounds are deeper than flesh, and healing them takes more than time—it takes unwavering support, understanding, and the willingness to confront the darkest parts of ourselves"

—Fabio in his late years

After Putnam was rescued by Fabio, he was swiftly taken to Magne, the capital city that shared the same name as the province. Specifically, he was brought to the Oswa household, the in-laws of Fabio, where Erin, Fabio's wife, had been raised after their family's departure from Kovir. Saving Putnam's life was of utmost urgency, with Kaer Seren being too distant to provide immediate help. Additionally, it was equally important to ensure Tubiel received a dignified funeral.

Although Fabio's in-laws could be strict at times, their actions were driven by their concern for their daughter's well-being, particularly due to her visual impairment. Nevertheless, they were good-hearted people, albeit with their idiosyncrasies. Interestingly, Erin happened to be visiting her parents when Fabio arrived with Putnam and Tubiel. Initially hesitant to welcome a mutant like Putnam into their home and devote themselves to saving his life, Erin's deep fascination with witchers and her persistent requests eventually convinced her parents to relent. In the end, they embraced Putnam as part of their family, going above and beyond to save his life.

Erin, on her part, was more than captivated. Putnam was the first witcher she had ever encountered in person! Fabio had previously shared stories about him, and he had even offered to take Erin to Kaer Seren to meet several other witchers (although circumstances prevented this). But now, she could finally experience him—not just as a distant tale, but to touch him, to hear him speak when he awakened. In those initial days, Fabio couldn't help but feel a hint of jealousy as he witnessed his wife dedicating so much of her time to Putnam, even if it was solely to keep a watchful ear on him.

After being in a terrible state, Putnam took several days to recover, precisely one

week since Fabio had arrived at his in-laws' home. Finally awakening on June 10, 1280, he was still in a dire condition but significantly improved due to the care he had received. He remained emaciated and experienced body pains resulting from malnutrition and the physical torture he had endured during his captivity. Nevertheless, he was alive, and with each passing day, he regained more abilities and strength. Meanwhile, during Putnam's coma, Fabio took it upon himself to prepare Tubiel for the funeral, ensuring that the body was in the best possible condition for when the witcher would be back on his feet.

The first few days after awakening were a grueling experience for the witcher. He not only had to cope with the physical toll his ordeal had taken on his body but also wrestled with profound mental and emotional challenges. As mentioned earlier, the recovery of his psyche would prove to be a lengthy and arduous journey, as the remarkable mutations that endowed him with superhuman abilities did not extend to healing his inner wounds.

Upon regaining consciousness, there was a lingering sense of disbelief, as if everything he had endured had been nothing more than a haunting nightmare. The surreal nature of his surroundings in an unfamiliar house, even amidst the comforting presence of familiar faces like Fabio's, only served to amplify this uncertainty. Yet, it was the sight of his wife's lifeless body that jolted him back into the painful reality. The loss of Tubiel, their cherished adopted son, his dearest "middle brother," and his closest friends became painfully evident—voids that would forever remain unfilled.

The overwhelming guilt he felt lingered with him long after his physical recovery, as if both he and the guilt had become intertwined as one. During these days, he tried to distract himself by engaging in conversations with Erin, recounting stories of witchers, the Griffin School to which he belonged, and the rigorous training he had undergone. Though painful most of the times, it served as a way to remember the accomplishments of those who had sacrificed themselves for him and what he had achieved himself. In a way, he tried to convince himself that this wound, too, would eventually heal, just like the wounds inflicted by monsters. However, he would soon learn that the path to healing was not as straightforward as he had hoped.

Erin, being a devoted witcher admirer, listened attentively, asked questions, and made notes in a writing system she had created called braille. When Putnam regained the ability to walk, the three of them, Fabio, Erin and him, would take walks together in the garden of the house, finding solace in the beauty of nature and the comfort of each other's presence.

However, at the end of each conversation, and every walk, his mind would invariably return to the same thoughts, with his Survivor's Guilt growing stronger each day: "If only," "If I had been able to," "If I had escaped." The constant rehashing of these thoughts gnawed at his soul, tormenting him with the endless possibilities of what could have been, of the choices he could have made differently. The weight of his perceived failures bore heavily on his heart, a burden that seemed insurmountable.

The nights were not any better; in fact, they were worse. During the day, at least, as his body gradually returned to normal, he could occupy himself with new tasks and repay Fabio and his in-laws for saving his life and arranging a dignified funeral for Tubiel. However, when darkness fell, a different reality unfolded—one fraught with nightmares, drenched in cold perspiration, consumed by agonizing screams, and plagued by a suffocating claustrophobia triggered by the haunting memories of his captivity.

Later on, in the closer future. In search of solace, he would sought refuge in the allure of hallucinogenic potions like Seagull, be it the Black or the White variety. The elixirs offered temporary respite, briefly lifting the veil of his pain and

providing a fleeting sense of release. Alternatively, he sought solace in the arms of women, seeking solace in their bodies and attempting to drown out the echoes of his self-loathing.

However, the majority of these encounters ended abruptly, as a deep-seated belief in his own monstrosity consumed him. He saw himself as undeserving of affection, convinced that he was a wretched being whose touch only brought harm. This perception shattered connections and left a trail of broken hearts in his wake.

His journey would become a labyrinth of fragmented connections, his soul burdened by the weight of guilt and self-loathing. The scars, both visible and hidden, dictated his existence for some time, as he yearned for redemption and release from the prison of his own mind. It was only with the arrival of Jolanta and [Marina](#) in his life that things began to change, albeit very gradually.

Tubiel's Funeral (June 15, 1280)

"As we gather here today, we are reminded of the profound loss we have suffered, bidding farewell to our beloved Lioness of Brenna. She was more than just a wife and a companion to Putnam. Tubiel was good friend, a force of nature, a fierce protector, and a loving soul who touched the lives of all who had the privilege of knowing her"

—Fabio Sachs' speech at the funeral of Tubiel of Brenna

The funeral of the Lioness of Brenna marked a poignant and emotionally challenging moment in the early stages of Putnam's "new life." The weight of grief and loss hung heavy in the air as they gathered in the tranquil setting of the Oswa family's garden at dusk on June 15, 1280. It was a solemn occasion, where the simplicity of the ceremony allowed the profound significance of their collective sorrow to be felt.

Fabio and Erin, understanding the depth of Putnam's connection to his beloved wife, took on the responsibility of organizing the funeral. They meticulously planned each aspect, ensuring that it reflected the dignity and respect that the Lioness of Brenna deserved.

Putnam, grappling with a whirlwind of emotions, provided occasional assistance, albeit with great effort. The psychological toll he had endured made each step forward a daunting task. Yet, he recognized the importance of participating in honoring his wife's memory and finding some type of closure amidst the sea of unanswered questions and lingering regrets.

As the sun dipped below the horizon, casting a gentle glow over the gathering, the ceremony began. Fabio's words resonated with a bittersweet blend of sadness and reverence, recounting the remarkable qualities and enduring spirit of the Lioness. Putnam attempted to speak, but his voice cracked with such intensity that he found himself unable to utter a single word. Erin, aware that she had never gotten to know Tubiel, remained respectfully reserved.

The three of them, the sole attendees of the funeral, fell into a contemplative silence. It was a moment of reflection, broken only by Putnam's tears that burst forth with increasing force. Trying to contain them, he steeled himself for the final step.

A funeral pyre had been prepared, following the [funeral rites of the witchers](#), specifically those of the School of the Cat. With great effort, Putnam conjured a gentle Igni Sign to light the pyre, for fire had become a difficult reminder for him after the tragedy he had endured. Just before the flames engulfed the pyre, Putnam, as if afraid of forgetting her, retrieved Tubiel's medallion, clutching it tightly as a constant reminder of her presence.

In that moment, as the fire crackled and cast dancing shadows, Putnam bid his beloved Lioness farewell, offering her one final tribute. He vowed to carry her memory within him always, symbolized by the medallion, a connection that would remain unbroken.

And so, amidst the flickering flames and the weight of grief, the funeral of the Lioness of Brenna came to a close, leaving Putnam to navigate the depths of his sorrow and embark on the challenging path of healing, forever carrying the indelible mark of his love for Tubiel.

Discussion and separation (mid - June of 1280) 💎

"As Tubiel's body was consumed by the flames and her ashes settled, Putnam collected them with a calm that seemed almost unnatural. He said he was stable, but I knew it was just a mask to keep us from worrying. I couldn't imagine the turmoil he was hiding inside"

—Fabio Sachs, Life beyond the Fiery Mountains (autobiography)

In the days leading up to Tubiel's funeral, Fabio didn't mention anything to Putnam about the four months they had spent searching for him until they finally found him. Fabio feared that, due to Putnam's mental, emotional, and physical state, he might engage in reckless behavior. He had promised Tubiel that if anything happened to her, he would take care of the witcher, a promise he had fulfilled more than adequately until then.

It wasn't until Tubiel's body was consumed by fire and her ashes settled, which Putnam collected to scatter in Brenna, the place his deceased wife would have wanted them, that Putnam became relatively stable in all aspects. However, this stability was merely a facade, as he had learned to appear better regarding his psyche to not worry Fabio and Erin more. It was during this time that Fabio began to open up and discuss everything with him. These conversations occurred at different moments over the course of the five days following the Lioness of Brenna's departure beyond the veil.

It is worth mentioning that what would happen next was practically inevitable. The effort to lift Putnam up again and help him emerge from the abyss into which he had fallen had been a great sacrifice, and Fabio, being as human as everyone else, paid the price for it. This was especially true due to the increasing closeness between Putnam and Erin, which heightened the mild jealousy that had surfaced during Putnam's coma (unfounded jealousy, it must be said, as despite Putnam acquiring a reputation as a womanizer in the future, he respected his friend and his wife as much as anyone, and Erin was deeply in love with Fabio). Eventually, Putnam gave Erin permission to touch his face with her hands and "map" it, allowing her to get a better idea of whom she was talking to. And, of course, Erin's comments about how beautiful Putnam was, both physically and internally (especially internally, as the redhead tended to describe people more by their voices and personalities), didn't help. However, there was another factor to add to this, which would contribute to the separation of the two friends for a year and a half.

And this was, of course, Sigurd. At first, when Fabio began to talk to Putnam about how Sigurd ended up traveling with them and how they couldn't turn back because it would have taken them more time to rescue him, Putnam accepted it well. The only thing was that he wouldn't have scolded the boy as they did, and he would have taken a gentler approach. But he could understand why they did it, as their safety was at risk (and in the end, it was, as it turned out). What bothered him, and was the cause of the terrible argument they would end up having, along with a growing sense of "justice" for Tubiel's death that had been building up in the witcher as the days passed and his physical condition improved, and Fabio's unfounded jealousy, was the "mistake" that the future explorer made by falling asleep and "allowing" Sigurd to escape and commit the recklessness that would ultimately lead to the deaths of both him and Tubiel.

As they delved deeper into their discussions, emotions ran high, and the rift between Putnam and Fabio widened. The weight of Tubiel's loss, coupled with the unresolved jealousy and blame, intensified their disagreements. Putnam felt a growing need for justice and closure, and he struggled to reconcile the tragic events that had unfolded. The bond between the two friends, once unbreakable, strained under the weight of grief, resentment, and miscommunication.

Before bidding farewell to Fabio's in-laws' home, Fabio, despite his anger towards the witcher, decided to return the two swords: the Ofiri steel saber and the silver sword to the witcher. These were the very weapons Tubiel had carefully placed in the carriage, anticipating a successful outcome that would warrant their return to Putnam. Given Tubiel's unfortunate departure from the world, it felt like a solemn duty to honor her memory by returning the cherished blades. Unspoken yet deeply understood, it was an act aligned with the wishes of the Lioness of Brenna herself.

Erin, silently observing the tense exchanges with a heavy heart, yearned to mend the rift between her beloved husband and dear friend. Though unable to intervene and reconcile them in that moment, she sought solace in assisting Putnam before his departure. Determined to lend her support, she mustered great effort to gather various Witcher materials from her extensive collection, with a primary focus on artifacts obtained from the renowned Griffin School. These particular items had once belonged to Kristov of White Orchard, their significance reaching far beyond their mere material existence.

Among the retrieved relics were the garments that Erin had carefully recovered from the fallen Witcher's possessions. Infused with memories and history, these clothes became a tangible connection to a lost comrade. Moreover, there was the striking white Griffin armor, its craftsmanship enhanced by the masterful modifications wrought by skilled dwarven hands. While seemingly a minor detail, the acquisition of this armor would soon prove to be far from inconsequential. The return of these swords and the infusion of Kristov's belongings into Putnam's journey would shape the impending events in profound ways.

Their separation, lasting for a year and a half, became a necessary respite for both of them to heal their wounds and find solace in their individual journeys. It was a painful chapter in their friendship, one marked by regret, longing, and a lingering hope for reconciliation. Little did they know that their paths would intersect again, and this would shape the history of The Continent forever.

Saved by Jolanta Dinmarb during his journey to Lyria (September of 1281)

After his argument and separation from Putnam, despite the pain of losing his friend, Fabio would continue with his life and plans, marching to Lyria & Rivia to finalize the remaining details for the expedition to the [Far East](#), which would depart early the following year.

To do this, he had returned to Gors Velen, and from there, he had begun to travel to recruit all those interested, starting with [Istredd](#) (who would eventually bring more people with him such as [Stucco](#) and [Zavist](#)) and ending with Eberhatt of Rivia and his six dwarf mercenaries. They marched towards Lyria, where they would meet to have an audience with the queen so she could personally meet all the participants of this venture. However, they agreed not to travel together and arranged to meet on the outskirts of Lyria on a specified date and time to go together to the audience. Fabio was afraid that his ambitious venture had been heard of by foreign powers who might try to thwart it, and he preferred to sacrifice himself in that case, as he was likely a probable target, rather than risking everyone else dying because of him. It was a trait, one could say, that he shared with his then ex-best friend who would soon reclaim his title.

And he was not mistaken, for on the way to Lyria, Fabio would be assaulted by what appeared to be a convoy of bandits (which was actually a group of mercenaries hired by the Nilfgaardian Secret Service) to kill him. He would have died there if it weren't for a [School of the Cat](#) witcheress, [Jolanta](#), who happened to be nearby and would end up dispatching the supposed bandits without a second thought upon seeing the situation. After that, Fabio and Jolanta would meet, and Jolanta kindly escorted Fabio to his meeting point before continuing on her way. In the process, they engaged in conversation and inadvertently discovered their connection through Putnam (although Jolanta wouldn't tell Fabio about her relationship with the witcher, instead using euphemisms). Fabio told her about Putnam, their friendship, and subsequent argument and separation. Jolanta would be moved by Fabio's story, and despite the pain she felt for Putnam's abandonment, her love for the witcher was so great that after listening to the future explorer tell all, before saying goodbye and parting ways, she encouraged the explorer that if he ever crossed paths with Putnam again, they should talk things out and resolve them. Unbeknownst to her, she would be instrumental in the reconciliation of the two friends and, in her own way, crucial to the future expeditions of the Temerian explorer.

Ironically, the Nilfgaardian Secret Service would try to assassinate Fabio again by hiring a witcheress from the same school and a known [acquaintance of Jolanta](#) a couple of months later.

Reunion and apologies from both (September of 1281)

"Understanding his need for recovery, I assured him the offer stood until December. With a final hug, we left the tavern, ready to prepare for our meeting with Meve. Deep down, I hoped Putnam would join us in the end."

—Fabio Sachs, Life beyond the Fiery Mountains (autobiography)

After being saved by Jolanta, whom Fabio didn't know would become his best friend's great love, Fabio reunited with the remaining members of the expedition. However, as it was already lunchtime, instead of heading straight to meet Queen Meve so that these members Fabio had recruited could be introduced by him as the rest of the expedition team, the group decided to make a stop on the outskirts of the city of Lyria at the tavern of The Red Crow, delaying their meeting with the monarch considerably.

As Fabio and his companions entered the tavern, they were greeted by the usual bustling crowd of patrons, lively music filling the air, and the owner of the tavern and Putnam's girlfriend, Marina. As they settled at a nearby table, she approached them with a smile and a friendly greeting. Marina recognized Fabio from what Putnam had told her about him; despite their differences, Putnam still cared deeply for Fabio. Putnam wasn't present at the tavern; he had gone out to secure one of his usual nearby contracts from that period.

Approaching their table, Marina's warm smile caught Fabio's attention, along with the lively sparkle in her eyes. He introduced himself and his companions, and Marina promptly took their orders for food and drinks. While waiting, Fabio noticed a distinctive Ofiri steel saber hanging on the wall, similar to the one his friend Putnam used to carry. Intrigued, he asked Marina about it.

Marina smiled, opting not to disclose her relationship with Putnam. Instead, she mentioned that the sword belonged to Putnam, who frequented The Red Crow. She described him as a kind and loyal friend who often visited despite his profession as a traveling witcher.

After Marina's words about Putnam being a loyal friend who frequented the tavern, Fabio couldn't help but feel a pang of guilt. He recalled the bitter argument that had caused a rift between them. Their disagreement had been intense, and Fabio realized too late that he could have been more understanding.

It had been a year and a half since they last saw each other, and Fabio wondered if it was too late to mend their friendship.

Lost in thought at the tavern, Fabio was brought back by Marina serving their food and drinks to the table. He thanked her and decided to enjoy the evening with his companions, yet he couldn't shake off the regret for his actions towards Putnam. Perhaps, he thought, there was still a chance to reconcile and rebuild their friendship. Fabio and his companions spent the afternoon and evening at the tavern, and as night fell, preparing to go to the Royal Palace to meet Meve, Fabio turned his head towards an unusual smell entering the tavern. The stench of mud, sewage, and zeugl guts was all too familiar to him. As he looked, he saw his old friend, a mix of relief at seeing him again, guilt over their estrangement, and a hint of jealousy at Marina's concern for Putnam.

An awkward silence filled the room as Putnam and Fabio locked eyes. The tension was palpable; neither knew what to say. It was Marina who finally broke the silence, showing concern for Putnam. She walked over to him, worry on her face, and inquired about his condition. Putnam responded with a wry smile, accustomed to her attentiveness. As Fabio observed Marina fussing over Putnam, it became clear they shared a deeper connection than friendship, making Fabio wonder what might have been had he been more understanding of Putnam's grief and traumas.

Despite his conflicted feelings, Fabio knew he needed to set aside his pride and make amends with his old friend. He approached Putnam, feeling the weight of their past disagreements and the necessity for forgiveness. They looked at each other silently for a moment before embracing. The tension seemed to dissolve, replaced by relief. Fabio and Putnam held each other tightly, conveying their feelings through the embrace. They remained like that for a while, wordlessly sharing warmth and reaffirming their friendship.

When they finally pulled apart, Fabio regarded Putnam with newfound understanding. He realized he had been too quick to judge without fully understanding Putnam's pain. Putnam, too, looked at Fabio with renewed appreciation, knowing his friend's intentions had always been caring. As they locked eyes, they knew their friendship was restored, and they would always support each other, no matter what.

Afterwards, Fabio explained his plans for the upcoming expedition and the meeting with Meve that night to introduce his companions. It was then he suggested Putnam join, knowing a witcher would be valuable for protection. Putnam chuckled at the idea, exchanging a knowing glance with Marina, before explaining he wasn't fit for royal visits or expeditions at the moment, covered as he was in mud, sewage, and zeugl guts. He needed rest and time to recover.

Understanding Putnam's position, Fabio assured him the offer stood until early December, giving Putnam time to decide. With a final hug, Fabio and his companions departed the tavern, eager to prepare for their meeting with Meve. Eventually, despite his doubts, Putnam would accept, joining the expedition departing early the following year.

Celebration in honor of the Expedition of Fabio Sachs to the Far East (end of 1281) 🏠

"I've heard of love at first sight, but trying to kill someone and then sleeping with them takes it to a whole new level. It's like she's playing a dangerous game of 'Romantic Roulette'. You never know if you'll end up in bed or with a dagger to your neck. But hey, kudos to you, Putnam. You've certainly raised the bar for first dates"

—Fabio to Putnam after Putnam saved him from being assassinated by D
`yaebi

At the end of 1281, the crown of Lyria and Rivia organized a grand party to honor Fabio Sachs and all the members who would accompany him on his bold expedition to the Far East. The celebration was a magnificent affair, drawing nobility from Lyria and Rivia, local scholars, and mages, all eager to commemorate the upcoming journey into uncharted territories.

Fabio Sachs, clad in an elegant ensemble of traditional Rivian fashion, exuded a regal aura befitting the occasion. His attire, adorned with deep blues and subtle gold accents, reflected the importance of the expedition ahead. Amidst the swirling excitement and animated conversations of the guests, Fabio navigated with a composed demeanor, engaging in discussions with various guests.

Unbeknownst to Fabio, danger lurked within the festivities. The Cat School Witcheress, D'yaabl, hired by the Nilfgaardian Secret Service, had infiltrated the party with a mission to assassinate Fabio and impede the Far East expedition, enabling Nilfgaard to maintain influence over the North through commerce despite losses in the three wars that had happened. As Fabio passionately articulated the goals and meticulous planning behind the expedition to the guests, he remained oblivious to the lurking threat. His focus was unwaveringly fixed on rallying support and securing funding for a future expedition (sadly for the Fabio of that time, he later obtained the funding from another kingdom rather than the nobles, scholars, and mages present at the party).

Meanwhile, Putnam Pitch, amidst his own emotional turmoil from his breakup with Marina due to joining the expedition and memories of Jolanta, who appeared that night, kept a watchful eye on Fabio. His occasional glances towards Fabio hinted at underlying concern and protective instincts, though Putnam's distractions momentarily clouded his vigilance. A brief lapse in his attention provided an opening that D'yaabl exploited to deceive Fabio and attempt to murder him.

However, in a twist of fate, as Putnam freed himself from his thoughts, his intuition sharpened when he observed D'yaabl subtly maneuvering Fabio towards a secluded balcony. Realizing the imminent danger, Putnam's resolve solidified into action. With swift determination, he intervened, confronting D'yaabl in a tense standoff. His plea to spare Fabio's life fell on deaf ears as D'yaabl remained steadfast in her deadly mission.

As tensions peaked, D'yaabl made a sudden, unexpected gesture fueled by the feelings that had emerged between her and Putnam—a swift kiss to Putnam—before swiftly evading capture and disappearing into the night. Putnam, momentarily taken aback by the unexpected turn of events, swiftly refocused on the urgent task at hand—protecting Fabio.

With a daring leap, Putnam intercepted D'yaabl's attempt to throw Fabio off the balcony and kill him, invoking the protective [Quen](#) Sign to shield them from harm as they landed heavily in the Royal Garden below. Assessing Fabio for injuries and finding him mostly unharmed, Putnam recounted the night's events to a curious Fabio, including his encounter with D'yaabl at the party and the shared history they had.

Returning to the party, Fabio and Putnam resumed their roles in the festivities, with Putnam discreetly maintaining a vigilant watch over his friend. Despite the relief of surviving the attempt on his life, Fabio couldn't shake the gravity of the situation, especially with D'yaabl still at large after disappearing from the party.

The celebration concluded smoothly, leaving a lingering sense of excitement and anticipation among the expedition members. Fabio, now fully immersed in preparations alongside figures like Istredd, dedicated himself to meticulous planning and ensuring the expedition's readiness. Discussions buzzed with enthusiasm about the unknown lands they would explore and the potential

discoveries awaiting them.

As departure approached, concerns surfaced among some expedition members about the unfamiliarity of the Far East and potential unforeseen challenges. Fabio reassured them with confidence, emphasizing the extensive preparations undertaken and instilling a sense of unity and purpose.

With supplies meticulously organized and equipment inspected, the expedition stood on the brink of a historic journey. Anticipation soared as they eagerly awaited the moment to embark, driven by determination to succeed and etch their names into the annals of history.

Expedition to the Far East (1282 - 1285)

So, Fabio and Putnam marched together in early 1282 with a group of different people to the Far East. The expedition included : Fabio as the explorer, cartographer, and expedition leader. Istredd, as a mage, who also served as a archaeologist, group physician, and informal co-leader. Putnam which assumed the role of the group's witcher and also a informal co-leader.

Stucco

Zangenis, a

specialized

mage in

offensive

magic with an

interest in

genetics, who

joined the

expedition to

collect exotic

monster

genes.

Putnam and Fabio (circa, 1282)



Unfortunately,

he met his demise in Zorzura in 1283. Zavist, a mage brought in as a possible replacement for Stucco, who also perished in Zorzura in 1283. Istredd had a strained relationship with Zavist but decided to include him in the expedition due to his abilities.

Hira Aen Hurashim, an [Aen Manche](#) elf from the Hurashim tribe, who had been the sole survivor of her tribe's extermination by Nilfgaardian soldiers from the Magne Division. She had been traveling alone since then and crossed paths with the expedition while they were traversing the Fiery Mountains. Putnam and Hira had a brief romance, and she shared valuable desert survival tips with him, benefiting not only the witcher but also other members of the expedition.

Eberhatt of Rivia, a healing mage, who joined the group as Istredd's replacement physician in case of emergencies. Six dwarven mercenaries that accompanied Eberhatt due to his lycanthropic condition. Later on, several Mardu individuals, including Monga and one nicknamed "The Explorer". [Kai Yih](#), a pirate captain, and her crew , although temporarily. [Łukasz](#), one of the last witchers from the School of the Wolf who had lived in the Far East, after the dissolution of the School in 1273, who joined the expedition while passing through [Zerrikania](#) on their way to Valkare. Łukasz would later settled in the [Tuyotuki Islands](#), but during his time in the expedition, he served as a substitute witcher for Putnam and also as a translator alongside the Mardu and Istredd.

At its peak, the expedition consisted of approximately forty-three individuals, including a cartographer, two Mardu members, five mages, two witchers, six dwarven mercenaries, and around thirty pirates. Later in Zorzura, after the events that happened between her and Putnam, D'yaebi would joined the expedition after being liberated from slavery. She was the last notable addition, not counting

the local assistance obtained in [Ketu Rahu](#) and the Tuyotuki Islands.

Thus, the explorer and the witcher found themselves in uncharted territories, encountering civilizations that the nordlings had believed to be mere legends and making contact with new and unknown cultures. One such encounter occurred in 1283 with the [Aen´Agde](#) elves.

The first year of the expedition ✨

Let's not deceive ourselves; the first year of the expedition was rather uneventful. There were no significant discoveries, unless we consider improving the map of the territory between Zerrikania, [Haakland](#), and the Northern Kingdoms a "*great discovery*". There were no surprises or incredible adventures. Despite being in unknown territory, the monotony of travel prevailed. However, this allowed the group to get to know each other better and form a strong bond. Istredd even developed a more than cordial relationship with Zavist, for example. As the saying goes, familiarity breeds fondness. And why did all this happen, you may wonder? Simply put, they got lost. Fabio was an excellent cartographer, but his sense of direction wouldn't improve until much later. The group's original plan was to reach Haakland by autumn of the same year, where they intended to negotiate with the Great Khan and secure a trade agreement with Lyria & Rivia, thus breaking Redania's monopoly on Haaklandian silk. However, they ended up arriving in early winter of that same year. The one who found more entertainment was Putnam, as he could enjoy battles against several monsters he had already studied, as well as new ones. In addition to his brief romance with Hira after she joined the group. In fact, the two most notable events were the addition of Hira and their encounter with the Mardu, descendants of one of the many human groups from the still undiscovered Eastern Continent, according to the Nordlings.

However, as the group approached their destination of Haakland, tragedy struck. In the midst of traversing the arduous Korath Desert, Hira fell victim to a ferocious desert monster. Despite Putnam's and the mages' valiant efforts, they were unable to save her in time, and the loss of Hira left a profound void within the expedition. This devastating event also caused the group to become even more disoriented, further veering off course.

However, their encounter with the Mardu, which occurred as a result of their dire situation, was surprisingly non-hostile. The time spent among the Mardu allowed Fabio Sachs to gather valuable information and improve his mapping of the area. This proved beneficial for the development of the trade routes that Lyria and Rivia sought to establish with distant lands. Additionally, some Mardu individuals even chose to join the expedition, further strengthening the bond between the two groups.

Thus, while the loss of Hira was a devastating blow to the expedition and Putnam, their encounter with the Mardu brought unexpected opportunities and knowledge, ultimately contributing to their ongoing journey to Haakland.

Winter in Kilan-Tal (Haakland) (Winter of 1282) ✨

"It's funny how almost a year on the road can make you adapt quickly. By the end of winter, we were almost locals ourselves—blending in, making friends, and learning the ropes."

—Fabio Sachs, Chronicles of the Far East Vol.1

After nearly a year of arduous travel, the expedition finally reached what they mistakenly thought was [Haakland](#), but in reality, it was the country of [Kilan-Tal](#), specifically the Patyak administrative division in the Gadny-Gür province. Gadny-Gür, influenced by Nordling immigrants and culture, spoke a dialect of the Common Speech, which helped ease the expedition's integration during their time there.

Before arriving in Patyak, the expedition encountered the horde of the prince of

Haakland, known by the Nordlings as Zeus, battling a colossal monster, a relative of the [Aka Allghoi](#) called the Shor Khorkhoi. This monster had been terrorizing the region, and Zeus sought to kill it to regain his honor in the eyes of his father, the Great Khan, due to a failed relationship in his past and the lack of witchers to hire, with the exception of some [Manticore Witchers](#) on the frontier with Zerrikania back in the day prior to the extinction of the school. Despite their efforts, the horde was nearly defeated, leaving only Zeus standing.

Unable to watch a human life be taken by a monster, Putnam intervened to save Zeus. Using his skills and cunning, he managed to kill the monster from within. Grateful, Zeus called Putnam "Khamgaalach" (Protector) and, as thanks, helped and traveled with the expedition after a brief discussion to meet his father, the Great Khan. This allowed the expedition to meet the highest authority in the country without much difficulty, in the capital city of Patyak where he was residing at that time. Despite their disheveled state due to the traveling, Putnam and the expedition were warmly received. The Great Khan, appreciative of Putnam for saving his son, offered the group hospitality and resources, and listened to what they had to say while also pledging to spread Putnam's name throughout the Khanate.

The expedition stayed through the winter, negotiating trade agreements and strengthening their rapport with the local authorities. Meanwhile, Putnam worked by killing local monsters and dealing with unexpected problems.

In search of mythical realms (early 1283)

After leaving Haakgan the expedition continued traveling, keeping a southeasterly direction with the objective of reaching supposedly mythical lands like Buyan, not only to find out if they were true or not, but also for the aforementioned commercial treaties they wanted to achieve, since they already had one, as the coexistence of the expedition with the Khan, gave its fruits, and this broke the monopoly that Redania had to sell the Haaki silk in the Northern Kingdoms, making the expeditionaries on behalf of the kingdom of Lyria and Rivia, get a juicy trade agreement, as they had promised to Meve, but they needed more.

Passing through Zerrikania, despite Putnam's personal reservations due to the events of 1278, served two crucial purposes. Firstly, it provided a more reliable means of verifying the existence of these territories, relying on sources beyond Nordling legends or the word of the Mardu within the expedition. Secondly, it was an unavoidable passage to maintain their planned route, avoiding significant alterations that would have resulted in a substantial increase in travel time. In fact, they opted to travel by ship along the Kerulen River, effectively cutting several weeks off their journey.

And it was in Zerrikania where the expedition would gain a new member, Lukasz, nicknamed the "Lion of Temeria," another witcher and one of the last remnants of the extinct School of the Wolf. After the official dissolution and subsequent extinction of the school in 1273 following Vesemir's death, Lukasz ventured to the Eastern Realm without originally intending to settle there, but eventually found a home. Lukasz proved to be a valuable addition, serving not only as support or a substitute in case something happened to Putnam but also as a mentor for the Griffin. With a 25-year age difference and, consequently, a significant gap in their respective careers, Lukasz had much to offer. While he may not have been as skilled in some areas as Putnam, due to his training under Vesemir, who was primarily a fencing instructor, Lukasz was highly knowledgeable when it came to monsters. Furthermore, after nearly a decade of living in Zerrikania, he had acquired a wealth of knowledge, making him not only a valuable asset in slaying unknown and dangerous monsters but also as a guide, translator, and much more. In fact, it was Lukasz himself who served as confirmation that realms like [Buyan](#) existed. During their process of replenishing materials and supplies, he introduced them to merchants from those lands, providing irrefutable evidence of

their existence.

Valkare

"Leaving Valkare with an alliance felt like winning a hard-fought battle. We set out to explore, and in the process, helped shape a nation's future."

—Fabio Sachs, Chronicles of the Far East Vol.1

After leaving the land of dragons behind, they journeyed through Valkare, a country that bordered Zerrikania to the south and had been relatively recently established. Valkare was once a part of the aforementioned country, and its population consisted mainly of dissidents to the rule of the sorceress queen and their families. Conflict frequently arose on the border, which was closely monitored by foreign mercenaries hired by the queen to prevent new dissidents from fleeing to the neighboring country.

It would be in this country where the expedition would encounter its first major conflict. Despite their desire to continue towards the yet unknown Buyan, they were compelled to intervene, albeit reluctantly. The situation complicated their passage, and as foreigners, they were met with suspicion and distrust. There were concerns that they could be spies employed by the Zerrikanian Crown, disguising themselves as travelers to facilitate a future attack.

The conflict, was a conflict between the progressive and closed-minded factions, it was a complex and nuanced struggle, shaping the path of the expedition and their interaction with the country of Valkare. It went beyond mere disagreements; it was a clash of ideals, visions for the future, and the very essence of the nation.

The closed-minded factions held onto the belief that Valkare should remain a haven solely for dissidents from Zerrikania. They aimed to maintain the status quo and saw their country as a sanctuary, patiently waiting for the sorceress queen's demise to reunite with their motherland. Their focus was on preserving the existing structure and identity, built over a short span of a few decades.

On the other hand, the progressive factions harbored concerns and fears about the vulnerability of Valkare. They understood the potential threat posed by Zerrikania and recognized the need for proactive measures to safeguard their people. They advocated for opening up the nation, seeking alliances with other powers, improving infrastructure, and nurturing a robust national identity that could withstand external challenges. They recognized that the sorceress queen's magical longevity meant waiting for her demise was not a viable long-term strategy.

The clash between these factions presented a complex dilemma for the expedition. Both sides had valid arguments, making it difficult to discern the right course of action. It required a delicate balance between respecting the sovereignty and aspirations of the Valkarean people and ensuring the expedition's safe passage towards the mysterious realm of Buyan and with luck, get a new commercial agreement for the kingdom that they were representing.

The time they spent in Valkare, in part, delayed them a bit, but on the other hand, it indirectly led them to where they ultimately ended up. The first thing they did was to try to earn the trust of the people before attempting to influence local politics in order to continue their journey. To accomplish this, they enlisted the skills of Lukas and Putnam, having both witchers fight against desert monsters that threatened the population.

Valkare was a very impoverished and precarious country, where people lived in conditions reminiscent of desert tribes. Their cities were what Zerrikania would consider small villages. Therefore, if they truly wanted to gain the trust of the locals, to be allowed passage, and hopefully secure more benefits for the kingdom of Lyria and Rivia, there was no better way to start. Both witchers completed a

total of 36 jobs, with each of them doing 12 solo missions and 12 as a team.

These tasks served multiple purposes. Not only did they showcase the witchers' combat skills and their dedication to protecting the people, but they also helped improve the perception of the expedition among the Valkarean population. As Lukasz and Putnam successfully eliminated the desert monsters, word spread about their heroic deeds, and trust began to grow.

Their efforts to assist the locals and make a positive impact went beyond simply completing contracts. Lukasz and Putnam took the time to interact with the Valkarean people, listening to their concerns and learning about their way of life. This genuine engagement helped bridge the cultural divide and fostered a sense of camaraderie and mutual understanding.

Another factor that contributed to the growing trust (taking advantage of the impact generated by Lukasz and Putnam, of course) to the point where they could intervene in local politics was the contribution of the expedition's mages, specifically Istredd and Eberhatt, accompanied by Fabio, who, although not a mage, was equally helpful. Their contribution was seemingly simple yet significant: healing.

Both mages, well-versed in the art of healing, began to treat the people of the region, assisted by some local healers whose knowledge was limited. Through this collaboration and the exchange of knowledge, the overall health of the population improved. It was common for expert healers attempting to flee to Valkare to be discovered and killed, making the presence of Istredd, Eberhatt, and Fabio invaluable in providing much-needed healing and medical assistance.

The mages' actions went beyond physical healing. They also offered comfort and solace to those who had suffered traumas and psychological distress, including survivors of past conflicts and persecution. By providing both physical and emotional support, Istredd, Eberhatt, and Fabio established a deep sense of trust and gratitude within the local population.

Their efforts did not go unnoticed. News of the mages' healing capabilities spread throughout the region, reaching even the most remote villages. The impact of their actions resonated deeply, as people who had previously lost hope found a glimmer of it in the form of healing and care. This, in turn, further solidified the expedition's reputation and facilitated their involvement in local politics.

With the trust of the population gained, after many days, they were finally able to engage in the politics of the country and intervene. As it was evident, they aligned themselves with those who would benefit them the most: the more progressive factions. However, they also sought to strike a balance to avoid, for example, inciting a civil war. It was not their intention. By aligning themselves strategically, they not only secured unhindered passage but also potentially negotiated a trade agreement on behalf of Lyria and Rivia that would benefit both Valkare and the northern kingdom.

Their intervention in local politics was carefully calculated. They engaged in diplomatic discussions and negotiations, using their influence and expertise to mediate between the conflicting factions. Understanding the delicate situation, they aimed to find common ground and bridge the gap between the closed-minded and progressive groups.

Recognizing the importance of stability and unity, the expedition emphasized the benefits of collaboration and cooperation. They highlighted how opening up to the world and establishing trade relations could lead to economic growth, improved living conditions, and a more prosperous future for Valkare. By presenting a vision that aligned with the aspirations of the progressive factions, they garnered support and built alliances within the political landscape.

Their ultimate goal was to establish a mutually beneficial agreement that would not only facilitate the expedition's journey but also lay the foundation for a long-lasting partnership between Valkare and Lyria and Rivia. Through skillful negotiation and diplomacy, they aimed to ensure that the trade agreement addressed the needs and interests of both parties, fostering economic prosperity and strengthening diplomatic ties.

The successful intervention in Valkare's politics not only secured the expedition's passage but also set the stage for a promising alliance. By leveraging their influence and aligning themselves with the progressive factions, they positioned Lyria and Rivia as valuable partners and opened doors for future collaborations.

With the trade agreement in place, Valkare would have the opportunity to expand its economy, benefit from the resources and expertise of Lyria and Rivia, and foster greater stability and prosperity within its borders. The expedition's involvement in local politics proved to be a catalyst for positive change, paving the way for a stronger relationship between the two nations.

As they continued their journey, the expedition would carry the goodwill and support of Valkare with them. The diplomatic success achieved in the country would serve as a testament to their ability to navigate complex political landscapes and forge alliances for the betterment of all involved.

Oponskoye 📍

After achieving success in Valkare, the journey continued southward, and the expedition made its way to the Kingdom of Oponskoye (or Opona in its native language). They initially believed it to be nothing more than a myth, originating from the early encounters between Zangvebarian merchants and Nordlings. However, to their surprise, the kingdom was real. It didn't possess the exaggerated wealth or happiness depicted in tales, nor was it located at the edge of the flatness of the world, but it undeniably existed. It was in Oponskoye that they first heard about the Tuyotuki Islands, information that would later prove to be valuable to them.

The Kingdom of Oponskoye was an ancient kingdom, very ancient indeed. It was not a kingdom of human or other non-human races but rather elven, specifically Aen'Agde. There were some human populations included, but they were fairly well tolerated, unlike in the west or in other worlds such as that of the [Aen Elle](#). Primarily, Mardu who had come into contact with these elves and, for various reasons, had ended up being integrated, along with their half-elf descendants after some time.

In Oponskoye, they were warmly received and treated, aligning with the legends told about the country. This was a relief after successfully dealing with the mistrust in Valkare. For the expedition, everything went smoothly, except for their inability to secure another trade treaty. The Aen'Agde, despite not being directly involved, held a certain wariness towards western humans in a more general sense, influenced by Isengrim's visit and his stories. They feared that increased interaction with Western humans would lead to their downfall. Ironically, the kingdom would eventually fall into the hands of those very eastern humans they claimed to tolerate and believed were superior to their Western counterparts, specifically the Haaki Empire led by Zeus during the 14th century.

Eastern Barsa 📍

After Oponskoye, the expedition resumed its journey to reach Buyan, having to pass through Barsa, more specifically Eastern Barsa, or as it was once known in Nilfgaardian history before its relatively unified status, the Southern Kingdoms or Taifas.

Barsa, at that time, had been an unstable area for a long time. However, despite

this, they experienced relative tranquility as they were not caught in the midst of any major political conflict, unlike the previously mentioned Valkare, even though it was not physical or violent. It is worth noting that this was due to Putnam's actions in [Ofir](#), which, even after 5 years, were still remembered and disseminated throughout the territories of Ofir and its influenced regions, including Eastern Barsa. As a result, they were able to secure a new trade treaty, in exchange for the support of Lyria and Rivia to this part of the region, alongside [Hannu](#) and Ofir.

Still, it must be said that they did experience some conflict, albeit on a much smaller scale. For the expedition, it was something they hadn't anticipated.

And this conflict began with the massacres that started happening in the area around halfway through their time in the region. These massacres, upon investigation, were discovered to be committed by witchers. More specifically, witchers from the [School of the Tiger](#) (although calling them a school was a stretch, as they were more like a band of ruthless mercenaries).

To provide better context, the "school," if we can even call it that, of the Tiger was the ultimate representation of how far a witcher can fall. If the School of the Cat was already known as a destination for witchers exiled from other schools due to their highly questionable actions, Guxart stands out as a notable example. He originally belonged to the School of the Griffin but ended up joining the School of the Cat. The "school" of the Tiger, so to speak, consisted of the outcasts among outcasts, a group that gradually came together over time. Since already mentioned, even the morally ambiguous Cats had their own sense of justice and there were limits that not even they dared to cross, things that these exiles, among the exiles, had done.

This "school" was composed of Luka, originally a witcher from the School of the Wolf, who survived the Kaer Morhen Massacre while he was on The Path. He was a close friend of Vesemir but eventually committed acts that the leader of the surviving Wolves strongly disapproved of, leading to his exile, despite the deep pain it caused due to their closeness. Luka joined the School of the Cat but was also expelled. It is believed that Luka may have been the founder of this "school"/group.

Chireadan, a witcher from the [School of the Raven](#), was also exiled and joined the School of the Cat but was expelled again shortly before the fall of [Dyn Marv](#), becoming a Tiger. Dermont Marranga, another exiled Wolf (believed to have gone through a similar experience as Luka), Clovis (similar to the aforementioned Wolves), Gwidon, a witcher from the School of the Cat expelled shortly before the fall of Dyn Marv, Thornwald, another witcher from the School of the Cat, and finally, the infamous Cat of Iello, Brehen, who needs no introduction. Brehen ultimately became the leader by seeking out this group, joining them, and killing Luka while he slept.

The expedition, driven by goodwill towards the government of Eastern Barsa and with the advantage of having two witchers at their disposal, along with specialized offensive magic mages, embarked on a mission to investigate the massacres that were occurring in strategic places. Eventually, they made a startling discovery: the culprits behind these brutal acts were not ordinary monsters or common assassins but other witchers.

Putnam and Lukasz speculated that the witchers responsible belonged to the School of the Cat, as it seemed the most logical explanation. However, the School had long been disbanded, and many of the Cat witchers carried bounties on their heads. Moreover, upon examining the crime scenes, it became apparent that the level of execution was far beyond what a Cat witcher would typically engage in. While the Cat witchers were known for their ruthless nature, their acts of violence were often driven by self-defense or uncontrolled emotions. What they were witnessing now was something far more calculated and sadistic.

At that moment, the reason behind these massacres remained unknown. However, the expedition deduced that it couldn't simply be a matter of personal satisfaction or revenge; there had to be a significant contractor orchestrating these events. The presence of an influential person or organization behind the scenes became a reasonable assumption, given the precision and sophistication displayed in the execution of these atrocities. It seemed as if they not only wanted to destabilize the region, but also to cause fear in the population something that only someone interested in controlling the area would do.

And so, the days went by. During this time, both Lukasz and Putnam, along with the mages, dedicated themselves to thoroughly studying the massacres and learning the patterns in order to surprise the perpetrators and capture them, or more likely, kill them.

To handle the problem more effectively, they divided into two groups. One group was composed of Stucco and Lukasz, while the other consisted of Zavist and Putnam. This arrangement paired both offensive mages with the two witchers, rather than having the witchers go solo while the mages went separately. It was a balanced approach that minimized the risk to the Wolf and the Griffin, and to a lesser extent, the mages. Furthermore, these individuals were invaluable members of the expedition, and losing any of them would be detrimental, especially considering the significant progress they had already made in their journey through the Far East.

Stucco and Lukasz surprised a portion of the Tigers in a nocturnal attack. As they had also split up to carry out the massacres, they confronted Chireadan, Dermont Marranga, and Clovis. In the process, they killed Chireadan and Dermont, leaving only Clovis alive, who revealed to them the reason behind their actions. In summary, they had been hired by the Nilfgaardian government (which supported Western Barsa) to destabilize Eastern Barsa and ultimately unite the entire region under their influence. Afterward, Lukasz spared Clovis' life and told him that if he redeemed himself for everything he had done, he would let him live in peace. However, if Lukasz discovered that Clovis returned to the path of wrongdoing, he would seek him out and kill him.

As a curiosity, it was Lukasz who dubbed these rogue witchers as "*Witchers of the School of Tiger*" upon seeing their roughly modified medallions of the School of the Cat, which vaguely resembled the creature brought by the Oferi during their significant contact with the Northern Kingdoms back in 1272.

Putnam and Zavist, on the other hand, took on the task of confronting Gwidon and Thornwald, catching them off guard in a dawn attack. They engaged in an intense duel, ultimately killing both of them. Before their demise, Putnam and Zavist managed to extract the revelation of their leader's identity. And it was none other than the already mentioned Brehen, infamously known as the Cat of Iello, now more widely recognized as the Biscoro due to the heightened sadism and brutality he had embraced (and that says a lot, coming from Brehen).

He contemplated discussing it with Fabio and moving on to their next objective in their journey. It was better not to get involved in that mess, especially since they had already caused significant harm by killing the former Cat of Iello's comrades. But of course, it was Brehen. Even when alone, he could unleash complete disasters, just as he did in that massacre. In the end, he chose to confront him; it was the only viable option. He would likely die in the process, but it was preferable to have that outcome rather than more innocent people suffering at the hands of cruelty. Nilfgaard would probably send others to try to destabilize the area, but at least it wouldn't be Brehen. And that, in itself, was a victory.

Brehen, when it came to the massacres, had gone his own way, living up to the infamous title he earned in Iello. Putnam and Zavist discussed it and decided that the best course of action was for Putnam to confront him. It seemed a bit crazy,

and in part, it was. But the Griffin had a plan that just might work.

So, without further ado, he set off on his search. Following the traces of death left behind until he finally found him. Discovering him in the ancient ruins that served as a hideout for the "school" of the Tiger in that arid region of the Continent.

Surprisingly for the Golden Griffin, Brehen recognized him. He had heard a lot about Putnam in that area of Barsa due to the Ofiri influence, and as always, those two-colored eyes were unmistakable. Brehen hated him, hated him immensely. A Griffin, and that hatred only increased upon hearing about his exploits. All the hypocrisy that the former Cat of Iello attributed to all the witcher schools, accumulated in one school and in one person.

Putnam, as he had planned, attempted to reason with Brehen. However, it proved to be a futile endeavor, as by the time Putnam realized it, Brehen had already unsheathed his steel sword and was advancing towards him.

The clash between Putnam and Brehen escalated into an all-out battle, each pouring every ounce of strength and skill into their strikes and defenses. The air crackled with tension as their swords clashed and sparks flew in the ancient ruins that served as the Tiger School's hideout in the barren region of Barsa.


Despite Putnam's initial advantage, Brehen's fury and determination knew no bounds. His attacks were relentless, fueled by a deep-rooted hatred and a thirst for inflicting pain. Putnam fought valiantly, countering blow after blow, but the toll of the prolonged fight began to wear him down. Fatigue gnawed at his muscles, threatening to undermine his precision and speed.

Brehen sensed the shift in momentum and pressed his advantage. Blow after blow rained down upon Putnam, his defenses crumbling under the relentless assault. The Biscoro reveled in his dominance, savoring every moment of Putnam's suffering. It seemed as if victory was within Brehen's grasp.

Yet, in his sadistic revelry, Brehen committed a fatal error. He underestimated Putnam's resilience and the depth of his resolve. As the Biscoro closed in, ready to deliver the finishing blow by tightening his silver chain around Putnam's throat, the golden opportunity emerged. As the Biscoro lunged forward to deliver the final, crushing blow, his silver chain poised to choke the life out of Putnam, the Golden Griffin seized the moment. With lightning speed and unwavering accuracy, he snatched one of Brehen's own daggers from his belt and thrust it deep into the witcher's heart, delivering a decisive and fatal strike.

Time seemed to stand still as the blade pierced Brehen's chest, and a mix of shock and realization flickered in his eyes. The once-feared Witcher of the Cat School, and later on, the Tiger, now lay defeated, his life extinguished by one of the many weapons he had wielded to bring pain and suffering to others. The battle was over, and Putnam stood as the victor, his heart heavy with the weight of the encounter.

As the dust settled and the echoes of their clash faded, Putnam couldn't help but feel a pang of bittersweet triumph. The menace that had haunted the Northern Kingdoms and later Barsa with his savage massacres was finally vanquished.

Hannu 

"Putnam took on the monster infestations like it was just another day at work. The man's relentless when it comes to keeping people safe."

—Fabio Sachs, Chronicles of the Far East Vol.1

The next goal of the expedition was [Hannu](#), an objective they had not planned but which arose on the spur of the moment after hearing more about that country, even if they were merely better founded rumors. Hannu, nevertheless, was a land

somewhat known to the Nordlings, though not entirely (Yennefer had been there in her day, specifically in the Nilfgaardian trading colony of Taremu). To reach their destination, they boarded a ship from the eastern coast of Barsa, where they were located, and set sail. The journey took them only about three days, aided by favorable winds and other factors, including the proximity between the two territories, until they arrived at Zaru, the coastal city and capital of the country.

During the voyage, Putnam once again demonstrated why he would be the future founder of the School of the Crane alongside Jolanta, as he took charge of dealing with several sea monsters that threatened to sink the ship they were on. Meanwhile, Lukasz was responsible for handling Vodyanoi attacks on deck, fighting alongside the mages.

The expedition's journey to Hannu, apart from better documenting the country, was obviously aimed at establishing an alliance and trade agreement between Lyria and Rivia and this nation. It was said, and not without reason, that Hannu, despite its incredibly hostile climate, with civilization flourishing only in the region known as the "Tears of Heru" (where two powerful rivers originating from the "[Free Lands](#)" flowed), was a highly powerful country with an ancient history predating even the Dauk and Wozgor in the North or the Markee in Ebbing. It was governed by "god-kings" known as "menes" in the Hannuan language—wise and just rulers who possessed a greater mastery of magic than any sorcerer in the Northern Kingdoms or Nilfgaard.

Securing an alliance and trade agreement with Hannu would not only enhance Lyria and Rivia's standing but also provide a counterbalance to Radowid V's expansionist ambitions, thus safeguarding the kingdom of Meve.

In the land of the menes, they searched for a Nilfgaardian guide who could speak the language of the country (as there were many of them along the coast, especially in the aforementioned trading colony) and help them to reach their first objective. Their goal was to secure an audience with the menes known as Meriamón III, which proved to be quite challenging due to the divine status attributed to the menes in the country. However, they eventually succeeded. This achievement came to pass when Putnam and Lukasz saved the life of the high priest of one of the temples located on the outskirts of the capital. They defeated a serpopard that threatened the priest's life. As this priest had direct contact with the menes, he arranged an audience with the "god-king" as a gesture of gratitude and payment for saving his life and dispatching the monster. Such an audience was considered the utmost honor in Hannu, and only a select few foreigners were granted such a privilege. Notable examples of these privileged individuals included rulers like the Emperors of Nilfgaard or the Malliqs of Ofir.

After having learned all the protocol matters, they finally had the opportunity to meet with Meriamón III, and in the process, they discovered why he was revered as a deity (besides Hannuan traditions). The place where he lived was truly spectacular, on par with several things Putnam had seen in Ofir. This, combined with the monarch's exceptional talent for magic, made him appear practically godlike in the eyes of both foreigners and nationals. They were apprehensive about making constant mistakes, as Meriamón was as imposing, if not more so, than the Great Khan. However, in the end, everything went smoothly as Meriamón developed a fondness for Fabio Sachs, Istredd, Monga, and Putnam. This allowed everyone to relax, and Meriamón was open to listening to what these foreigners had to offer.

After a while of conversation and questioning, Meriamón agreed to sign their proposal for trade agreement / alliance but asked for several favors in return. He needed to make sure that they were genuinely honorable men who would uphold their word. Failing to do so would potentially put Hannu at even greater risk by aligning with another foreign power hostile to Nilfgaard.

Stucco, Zavist, The Explorer, and Eberhatt were assigned to investigate whether the Nilfgaardian ambassador had been responsible for financing recently suppressed rebel groups. Meriamón had suspicions that Emperor Emhyr might be planning to initiate a war against the country and annex it as another province, in an attempt to leave a powerful legacy for the empire before his death (Emhyr would die in 1290).

Lukasz was tasked with dealing with a recently discovered cult that was believed to be responsible for the murders of several priests. The cultists had fled to the desert, and Lukasz had to find them and bring them back to face trial.

Fabio, Istredd, and Monga, on the other hand, would be providing support by staying in the capital and making the most of their time at what the Hannuans called the "Lair of Thot" (translated from their original language). It was an important library that once rivaled that of Nilfgaard. They would study and understand the knowledge preserved there in order to better assist their companions in their respective tasks. Additionally, they would try to make copies of any valuable texts they could find to bring them back to the North.

And what about Putnam? Well, Putnam was assigned a rather standard task compared to what the others were given, but he didn't complain. His task was simply to rid Hannu of monster infestations. The Mazoi, who would have handled such tasks in the past, had lost many men to these creatures and were unable to cope (in the past, a witcher from the [School of the Rhino](#) or the [School of the Scorpion](#) would have been assigned this task, despite the Mazoi's reluctance, but they were extinct). Putnam was provided with a moreli (a larger relative of the Ofiri camel) as a mount to navigate the country more effectively, along with other resources such as a translator and a guide. However, fortunately, with Putnam's proficiency in Ofiri and his intuition, he didn't need them and was able to manage on his own. The Ofiri and Hannuan languages were mutually understandable to about 60% extent.

Once everything was ready, each member of the expedition set off to fulfill their assigned tasks to prove to Meriamon that they were people of their word and get the menes' signature on the agreement/alliance. Which, after some time in the country, they finally managed to do by each one of them solving the different tasks assigned to them.

布延 (Bùyán), the land of the Dragon Kings (late spring / early summer of 1283)

"Never thought we'd owe our lives to a pirate, but Kai Yih proved that sometimes the most unlikely allies make the best friends."

—Fabio Sachs, Chronicles of the Far East Vol.1

After their success in Hannu, the expedition set course for [Buyan](#). However, their fortunate streak would come to an end sooner rather than later, as the toughest part of their journey made itself known almost immediately upon their arrival in the kingdom they had longed to reach.

布延 (Bùyán) nordlinged as Buyan, also known as Bujan, Buian, Brouka or Lomon, depending on which area of Bia Thin you ask, was a mountainous kingdom located inland, which could be accessed by navigating one of its many rivers upstream. It was situated along the so-called [Route of Colors](#) (named after the trade of colorful fabrics and vibrant gemstones), a commercial route that connected the eastern parts of the Nilfgaardian Empire with remote places like [Vinland](#) in the Far North. This made Buyan a country greatly benefited by trade, an ideal country to establish a trade treaty with Lyria and Rivia, even more so than the others they had already established treaties with. While those treaties were positive, they would not have been as significant as this one, as it would have allowed the Route of Colors to reach the Northern Realms more directly. However, the circumstances in which they found the kingdom, unfortunately, ended up

preventing this from happening.

The history of Buyan is long and complicated, but to summarize, the territory, like Valkare, had once been part of the Great Zerrikania through the marriage of one of its princes to the queen of Zerrikania. However, it eventually gained independence. By the time the expedition arrived, centuries had passed since then. Nevertheless, Zerrikania and Buyan maintained a strong relationship, and both cultures shared common traits due to the time when they were one united country. One of these shared traits was none other than their worship of dragons. In fact, the people of Buyan, up until that time, had been ruled by a dynasty of kings known as "*Drüg gyalpo*" or "Dragon Kings." It was said that they were descendants of a bronze dragon, specifically the bronze dragon who became the first king of Buyan and under his leadership, he unified the warring human tribes, after centuries of conflict, finally brought peace to that land.

But everything must come to an end, and by the time Fabio and the rest of the expedition had arrived in that territory, it was also the case for the Dragon Kings dynasty. Just a few years prior, the dynasty had fallen due to a popular uprising sparked by a dire economic situation caused by a period of terrible harvests and a steep increase in taxes, along with foreign intervention of certain countries from the region of [Melukka](#). This led to the army rising up and, before long, seizing power, exiling the surviving members of the royal family. The new government that emerged was the Dreki Triumvirate, composed of the three brothers who had led the uprising: Chalik Dreki, Norbu Dreki, and Tandin Dreki (or at least, that's how they would be known to the Nordlings based on the works published by Fabio Sachs).

Their government, as one would expect, was harsh, marked by discipline and severity. Fueled by the fear of losing their country forever to foreign intervention, they became increasingly closed off, almost striving for autarky. Their xenophobia reached levels that would even frighten the most ignorant and brute Nordling. Consequently, upon the expeditionary group's initial contact with the people of Buyan, they were immediately attacked, subdued, captured, and brought before the country's justice system for judgment, solely based on their foreign origins and their intention to establish a trade treaty. Driven by paranoia, the Buyanese believed that such a treaty would subject them to the domination of another country, an outcome they were unwilling to accept after enduring numerous hardships.

After that, the expedition spent several days imprisoned, ironically saving themselves from execution thanks to two terrible things: bureaucracy and piracy. Due to bureaucracy, it took several days to prepare the execution, which allowed them to survive long enough for pirate [Kai Yih](#) and her crew to attack the city of Bhoatanta where they were held. They were "rescued" by her, although their fate was not much better. Kai Yih took them as slaves with the intention of either incorporating them into her crew or selling them due to their exoticism in those lands.

The pirate Kai Yih



Interestingly, Kai Yih subtly and indirectly became the inspiration for the animal that Putnam would adopt for his school, the crane, due to a large tattoo of a black crane on her back, which concealed the marks of her dark past.

Kai Yih was an intriguing woman in every sense. In terms of her physical appearance, she stood out with freckles adorning her face, a result of sun exposure and her skin type. Her slanted pink eyes and dark green hair, both eyebrows and head hair, added to her unique look, making her distinct even in that region of the Continent. These characteristics indirectly hinted at her quadroon heritage.

She was a tall woman, though not as tall as Putnam, but still considered tall by Tuyotukian and Biathinian standards. She possessed an elegant yet commanding demeanor and figure, even though her physique, at first glance, might not have matched that of her male counterparts. While they exhibited brute strength, she showcased agility and swiftness. However, when it came to asserting her authority, she did so not through fear but through earning respect. Her men regarded her as the sole deserving and capable leader among them.

Her story is complex and intricate, so let's summarize it briefly before moving on. Hailing from the Kingdom of Lichavis, Kai Yih had humble origins. At a very young age, her parents sold her as a child prostitute, and through a series of events, she ended up in the Tuyotuki Islands, where she served for a period of time. When she was around 16 years old, during the attack on the city of Yominokuni on Takami Island, she was captured along with her fellow prostitutes by a Zerrikanian pirate known as Hagana Javed (or Hagalér Javed in the original Zerrikani dialect). Hagana eventually freed the girls and provided them with a better life, but he developed a strong infatuation with Kai and raised her as his own daughter, considering her his second daughter after already having one of his own. After Hagana's death in the 1270s due to factors like old age and gout, he passed on his ship and crew to Kai.

After taking them as slaves, Kai assessed them physically and interrogated them to gauge their potential, which, fortunately for the group, would lead to their path to freedom, although they couldn't see it at that moment. It was during this time that the expedition discovered Kai's linguistic abilities, as she spoke up to six languages: three Bia Thin dialects, Tuyotukian, [Zerrikani Dialect](#), and the [Nordling Common Tongue](#) (although the latter with a pronounced Zerrikanian accent). During the evaluations and interrogations, Putnam played the card of his charisma and gradually won her over, using his charm and the unique physical factor of his bicolor eyes (among other things, such as the fact that Putnam and Lukasz had once saved her life when Eberhatt transformed into a werewolf due to not taking his medication for a long time). Sooner rather than later, the expedition was liberated, and Kai Yih agreed to take them wherever they wanted, but in exchange for a favor. And that favor was none other than helping her overthrow the Dreki Triumvirate. If there was one thing she had acquired from her almost adoptive father, apart from her love for the freedom that pirate life represented, it was her hatred for oppressive governments, and that regime was one of them. According to Hagana's Pirate Code, it was the duty of a pirate to overthrow oppressive governments whenever possible, to show the world the benefits of true freedom.

Kai Yih, along with her crew, had embarked on a daring endeavor of guerrilla warfare, utilizing plundering as a key strategy (in fact, it was during one such plundering operation that they took the expedition as prisoners/slaves). However, despite their efforts, their approach hadn't yielded the desired results. Recognizing the need for a different approach, Kai Yih, having developed a sense of empathy towards the captives, particularly due to Putnam's influence, decided to seek their assistance by requesting a favor.

With a clear plan in mind, Kai Yih understood that the success of her mission would depend on assembling a formidable force. She recognized the unique skills possessed by the expedition's mages, which made them valuable additions alongside the skilled witchers. The proposition was met with intense deliberation by the expedition members, but ultimately, they were convinced by Putnam's

persuasive abilities and his growing bond with Kai Yih, both emotionally and otherwise.

The core of the plan revolved around summoning the pirate confederation, a gathering of like-minded eastern pirates led by Kai Yih herself on occasion. Kai Yih, renowned by various epithets such as (translated) "The Pink Monster," "The Black Crane," "The Scarlet Siren," and "The Jade Tempest" in the Far East, had established a formidable reputation as a pirate captain. Summoning the confederation would not be a daunting task, given her standing within their ranks.

With the combined strength of the pirate confederation and the assistance of the expedition, their strategy would involve launching coordinated attacks on the various cities of Buyan, many of which were situated near rivers. By capturing these cities, they aimed to weaken the grip of the triumvirate government and incite rebellion among the populace. The act of plundering these cities would further fuel discontent, leading to potential uprisings, including within the army itself, which could eventually contribute to the downfall of the triumvirate.

The end of the Dreki Tyranny ✦

After some time (less than they had anticipated, though), they succeeded in reuniting the pirate confederation once more and, most importantly, organizing themselves without being discovered by the then government of Buyan. The fleet was immense, comprising approximately 30 ships, including Kai Yih's own, and boasting around 10,000 men. The rivers in that region of Bia Thin were colossal, even larger than the Pontar in the Northern Realms. It was thanks to this that they never found themselves overcrowded at any point, allowing them to navigate freely.

After several meetings, the aforementioned plan was put into action. For the members of the expedition, the environment was somewhat uncomfortable since they were not accustomed to the pirate life. However, they quickly managed to adapt, with Putnam and surprisingly Istredd being the ones who adapted the best. The pirate confederation consisted of members from all parts of the Far East, primarily Bia Thin and Tuyotukian pirates, followed by some Zerrikanians, and to a lesser extent, Melukkans.

In fact, during that time, Putnam and Lukasz were recognized as witchers, and as a gift, they were given two sets of armor from the extinct [School of the Lungonite](#), which was unknown to them. This later led Istredd, around the 1290s, to publish an essay with indirect help from Putnam, who had encountered some exotic schools, two of them being extinct—the Spider and the Scorpion—and the [School of the Lion](#), which was still active. The essay focused on the migrations of witchers and how, following the dissolution of the Order of Witchers, the guild could have expanded across the Continent with numerous schools beyond the Northern Realms, Nilfgaard, and even Zerrikania.

The attacks, meticulously planned and executed under Kai Yih's strategic command, aimed to strike a balance between achieving their objectives and minimizing harm to innocent civilians. While the pirate raids were undeniably brutal, Kai Yih's strict orders ensured that the focus remained on neutralizing the military forces rather than causing unnecessary harm to non-combatants.

The primary objective of the attacks was to cripple the military apparatus of the ruling triumvirate. By systematically dismantling their armed forces, Kai Yih sought to expose the vulnerability and ineptitude of the government in safeguarding its people. The pirates aimed to create a power vacuum that would compel the population to rise up against their tyrannical rulers, driven by their frustration and disillusionment with their supposed protectors.

Kai Yih understood that if the attacks were perceived as a direct assault on the civilian population, it would inadvertently rally the people together in defense of

their homeland, potentially reinforcing the grip of the triumvirate government. Instead, she strategically focused on targeting military installations, supply lines, and strongholds, inflicting substantial damage and sowing doubt among the populace about the government's ability to ensure their safety.

The calculated approach taken by Kai Yih and her crew showcased their keen understanding of the political landscape. They aimed to exploit the discontent simmering beneath the surface, leveraging the people's disillusionment to their advantage. By presenting the ruling triumvirate as incapable of protecting their subjects from the relentless pirate onslaught, they hoped to ignite a spark of rebellion that would ultimately lead to the downfall of the oppressive regime. Which, eventually ended up happening and causing a new dynasty of Dragon Kings to rise in Buyan.

Once the attacks came to a close, Kai Yih remained true to her word and fulfilled her promise to the expedition. She led them to their next destination, which happened to be the illustrious city of [Zerzura](#). Although, some members of the expedition viewed this development as a setback, as it meant returning to the Barsa region once again. However, others saw it as a reasonable choice, since they were going with the intention, not only to explore, but to benefit the kingdom of Lyria and Rivia with trade treaties, considering that Zerzura, the last independent stronghold of the former Southern Kingdoms, was renowned for its prosperity in the East, so a vote was held, and the majority voted in favor of going to Zerzura.

Zerzura, The White City (summer of 1283)

"Nelea, the queen. Who would've thought? Putnam's mother. Life's full of surprises, huh?"

—Fabio Sachs, Chronicles of the Far East Vol.1

Zerzura, the White Pearl of Barsa, that is how the expedition had come to know it during their time in the region. It was a city-state of contrasts, renowned for its fame and infamy, a repository of knowledge that had long been considered lost, while also serving as a wretched place for slaves, depending on whom you asked across the Continent. While it initially seemed like an intriguing target, Hannu held a stronger allure for them. Yet, in a curious turn of events, they ultimately found themselves gravitating towards Zerzura, as if destiny was beckoning them to follow that path.

The city-state had been the sole survivor of what was formerly known as the Southern Kingdoms before they unified and became the region of Barsa. It was considered a separate territory on most maps, as after centuries of existence and various attempts by the Barsamen, both from the east and the west, to annex it, it had managed to withstand as an independent enclave.

Isolated from the rest of the world, the city was solely linked to other civilized locations by stone roads that emanated from its various gates. Zerzura was nestled within a region of Barsa renowned as the Great Oasis, where a vast lake, resembling an inland sea, sprawled. This body of water, known as the Red Sea due to its elevated copper concentration, cast a reddish hue, necessitating the Zerzureans to filter it before utilizing it for their needs.

Due to its geographical location, once the navigable rivers ended, they had to travel on mounts or on foot through the desert, following one of the stone roads they found. It took only a few days, and although the heat was somewhat unbearable, that was the only inconvenience they faced.

The city and its surrounding area left them awestruck, despite having witnessed much during the expedition. The striking contrast of the pure white city against the backdrop of the nearby oasis made it appear as an absolute paradise after days of traversing the desert. Its architecture was nothing short of breathtaking,

rivaling even that of the elves. However, their enchantment would soon give way to a harsh reality as they faced a situation reminiscent of what occurred in Buyan, but this time without the intervention of the pirate. For Putnam, the impact was especially profound on an emotional level, as the white city would unearth fragments of his past that he never imagined encountering.

The reception they received, although initially tense as was customary in the white pearl of Barsa to foreigners, turned out to be quite warm, resembling the welcome extended to wealthy traders, despite having nothing to trade. This surprised them, possibly due to the prejudices some members of the expedition held about Zertzura, but they accepted it nevertheless, interpreting it as a sign that their visit to the city would be successful. And to some extent, that proved to be true.

The people treated everyone well, except for Lukasz and Putnam due to their mutant nature. As for Putnam, the locals couldn't help but feel curious about his heterochromatic eyes, which evoked a mixture of fear and fascination. The reason behind this was that his eyes reminded them of their current queen, [Nelea Sova](#). It turned out that Nelea was Putnam's biological mother, the same woman who had abandoned him as a baby to ensure he had a dignified death and wouldn't suffer under Aamad's experiments. It was through this act that she indirectly set him on the path to becoming a witcher. As a result, whispers and rumors about the "foreigner" spread rapidly, increasing the interest in the expedition. In less than a week since their arrival in the city, they were summoned to the Royal Court. Nelea, naturally, was intrigued to find out if there was any remote possibility that Putnam was one of the two children she had been compelled to abandon. Something that, although it might have seemed positive at first, it was not the case.

The Zertzureans physically shared certain features with what an outsider would consider the standard Melukkan, but more beautiful. This was the result of a mix between Proto-Nilfgaardians (meaning half-elves of Aen Nîlfe) and the early Barsamen. It was not uncommon to see a lot of people with hair and eye colors typical of this elves among them. As for the language, the Zertzureans, like the Zerrikanians, spoke a dialect of Elder Speech that was relatively more intelligible with the Elder Speech than the Zerrikani dialect. Istredd was able to serve as a translator for the expedition during their time in the city without much difficulty, and in fact, he started working on a dictionary. However, this dictionary would be lost due to what would happen later on. To make a comparison, the difficulty between the Zertzurean Dialect and Elder Speech was a little higher than that of a speaker of Elder Speech understanding the Ellylon of the Aen Elle.

When they were called to the Royal Court, albeit due to the curiosity aroused by Putnam's eyes, the expedition was thrilled, believing they could replicate the success they had in Hannu, but at an even quicker pace. It was a collective thought, somewhat naive, but they couldn't help but feel it, considering the circumstances that surrounded them.

After abandoning her two children, Nelea dedicated herself to traveling across the Continent, trying to elude Aamad until enough years had passed and the sorcerer grew tired of pursuing her. During her travels, similar to her son before Tubiel's death (disregarding his role as a witcher), she devoted herself to helping people to the best of her ability. Eventually, she arrived in that city where she would overthrow the tyrannical queen who ruled over it, thereby liberating the people of Zertzura. They quickly organized a vote and elected her as their new queen since the city-state operated as an elective monarchy.

Nelea's reign, at least during the first decade, was good and prosperous. However, it soon began to decline as she fell into the same vices as her predecessor, becoming tyrannical and oppressive. The fact that she was a sorceress made it difficult for anyone to oppose her. This decline was a result of the rapid

deterioration of her mental health, caused by the very thing that granted her Source abilities: Manisa's Genesis. This gene endowed its carriers with characteristic blue and green heterochromatic eyes, along with an affinity for magic and other notable traits such as the absence of body hair in both sexes, lack of menstruation (while maintaining fertility) in women, a strengthened immune system, a slender and athletic appearance, and a youthful look that lasted longer than usual. Additionally, it extended their lifespan beyond that of an average human, reaching up to 150 years.

However, this gene was actually of artificial origin, a crude joke and a poor imitation by humans, specifically those from Ofir, who sought to replicate the abilities of the Aen Saevherne, particularly the Aen Saevherne among the Aen Nilfe, who were capable of creating powerful things like the Navigator Gene or the renowned Hen Ichaer. The gene's instability led to occasional and random manifestations of mental illnesses among its carriers, including schizophrenia, borderline personality disorder, Capgras syndrome, and others.

Remarkably, Putnam was spared from developing schizophrenia due to the mutations he acquired as a witcher from the School of the Griffin. If he had belonged to the School of the Cat, it is likely that the illness would have been exacerbated or even manifested earlier.

The meeting with the queen was, therefore, both strange (mainly for Putnam, meeting his biological mother after so long), emotional (because Nelea, despite everything, recognized Putnam, first suspecting it from his eyes, and then confirming it thanks to a shared birthmark on their shoulders), and initially positive (as Nelea treated the expedition in the best possible way, convincing them that the monarch would be very willing to listen to their offers and collaborate with them). Also, upon learning that they were all quite friends between them, she treated them as if they were part of her family, with some emphasis on Fabio and Istredd due to their closeness to Putnam, it must be said.

Despite lacking the strong physical resemblance that had been seen between Putnam and Nibras, Nelea and Putnam still exhibited discernible physical traits that hinted at their blood connection as mother and so. In addition to their heterochromatic eyes and the shared birthmark on their shoulders, their lips and the shape of their cheeks further contributed to the evidence of their genetic heritage.

Nelea and Putnam possessed lips that bore a striking resemblance, with a similar shape and contour. Their lips, adorned with a subtle curve, bestowed an enchanting charm to their smiles. Though their smiles may have conveyed different stories, the underlying resemblance was undeniable, serving as a testament to their shared lineage. Furthermore, the form of their cheeks exhibited a similarity, further highlighting their familial connection. There was a subtle symmetry and structure to their cheekbones, which subtly mirrored one another, reinforcing the notion of their shared genetic traits.

While physical traits can be powerful indicators of familial ties, it is important to note that their connection extended far beyond mere appearances. The bond between Nelea and Putnam transcended the realm of physical characteristics, delving into shared mannerisms and idiosyncrasies. It was in the way they laughed, their shared gestures, and the subtle nuances of their behavior that their familial connection truly came alive.

After the reunion, they were offered to stay at the palace and explore more of the city, its people, and its customs, thus spending a few wonderful days, even for Putnam, who had become more cautious but allowed himself to be carried away by the overall sentiment of the expedition, especially by the fact that he had his mother back in his life. His only concern at that time was D'yaebi, finding out whether she was still alive or not. However, he didn't know how to approach the

topic with the queen, fearing that discussing the issue of slavery might offend her and lead to a disastrous situation. Having developed a certain bond with his mother during that time, he was afraid of jeopardizing it.

Ultimately, he attempted to inquire about D'yaabl, but his efforts only yielded vague or nonsensical answers. The only glimmer of hope he received, albeit faint, was overhearing some guards discussing a dangerous woman who had attempted to assassinate the overseer responsible for the slaves in the city's farming areas.

Nelea for her part, barely separated from the witcher, Putnam learned a lot about his origins, more than she already knew from her stay in Ofir. Nelea also consented to him, as if trying to make up for the time she was not with him. Putnam, although a bit overwhelmed, accepted it without problems. Because he noticed that there was something wrong with the woman, he noticed her to be broken and tired, but covering her appearances (in that sense like him) and the witcher, regarding to perceive that state, was not usually wrong. And such was the case, because Nelea suffered from paranoid schizophrenia, and she was only having a period in which the symptoms had diminished a little. It would be because of this, in fact, that the expedition would suffer the hardest part of their journey. Since once the "grace period" were over for Nelea, and the symptoms returned with force, the paranoid schizophrenia got the better of her, and made her enslave Putnam and the expedition, after she alleged that they had tried to poison her to her guards.

Concerning the rest of the expedition, before their enslavement, Nelea willingly accepted everything she was told and signed a trade agreement (though regrettably, it would never come to fruition). Soon after, driven by impulsiveness, she ordered the construction of a new stone road to the most nearby city in Barsa, envisioning a smoother flow of future trade with Lyria and Rivia. However, the road after the enslavement of the expedition, remained unfinished and eventually succumbed to the relentless desert.

The days as a slave were arduous, not primarily due to the work itself, which involved mining in a nearby quarry and toiling in the fields, but rather because of the treatment and punishments endured as a result of numerous escape attempts he tried.

The Slaves Revenge 🗡️

During the first days as a slave, Putnam did not encounter D'yaabl. This was mainly because they were assigned to different work sites. However, he heard numerous rumors about her. While her name was not explicitly mentioned, Putnam could deduce from the behaviors that it must be the witcheress. The rumors varied but could be broadly categorized into two groups. There were rumors about her dangerous nature, and shortly after, rumors emerged of her rebellion against the slave masters. According to these rumors, she led a small group of slaves, instigated an uprising, and managed to escape, leaving several soldiers dead in her path. Some claimed she had disappeared into the depths of the oasis, while others believed she sought refuge in the abandoned areas of the city. How she accomplished all of this, considering the formidable nature of the Zerkura soldiers who were known to be a match even for a witcher, remained a mystery. However, the Irbis of Hengfors possessed the ingenuity and cunning necessary to overcome such obstacles.

However, it wouldn't be long before Putnam could find out for himself. Unexpectedly, his path crossed with D'yaabl's once again when she organized an attack with the (former) slaves under her command on the quarry where he was working. They overwhelmed the soldiers, captured the slave workers, and brought them to her hideout deep inside the oasis. D'yaabl's intention was to recruit them to her cause before granting them freedom. She had a plan to overthrow the monarchy of Zerkura and bring an end to the city-state's slavery once and for all.

The group of slaves, by the way, was diverse, primarily composed of non-humans (many of whom were of dyrians ancestry) and a few foreigners (among them, the members of the expedition). Although it may have appeared inconsequential, this diversity would prove to be advantageous in the near future.

Physically, D'yaabl hadn't changed much. She had shorter hair, acquired some new scars (including a few on her face), and appeared thinner. Her body was also adorned with freckles from the sun.

The reencounter between D'yaabl and Putnam (which would be the last, both for the good and for the bad, for what would happen later) was tense at first, as D'yaabl had held a grudge for not having saved her from her fate as a slave in Haakland and having ended up there, with which she was about to try to kill him again as soon as they crossed glances and a few words. Luckily, Fabio (who had been informed of Putnam and D'yaabl's meeting in Haakland by Putnam himself after leaving that country) intervened just in time on seeing the situation, revealing to D'yaabl that Putnam had not only killed Brehen (something that was quickly corroborated by the rest of the expedition) but also recovered the sword (thus saving the witcher's life and to a certain extent, making amends with him for the events of 1281), making the initial tension of the reunion turn into something emotional that ended with a passionate kiss between Putnam and D'yaabl. As if the Irbis, without words, thanked him for having put an end to one of the sources of her suffering, and for having recovered that object that was so valuable to her, so that finally, after decades of suffering, she could not stop herself on her way to healing and peace of mind (because the advances arising from the bond between them, although important, were not enough).

And although their bond would grow and strengthen after that, they would need time for it, as they were obviously not in the best situation and had to resolve their current predicament first. For the record, unlike Putnam, D'yaabl did not plan the fall of Zerkura as an act of justice or empathy towards the remaining slaves; rather, it was driven by revenge and a desire to plunder its riches. Yes, she had changed, and yes, she had regained some of the humanity she had lost, paving the way for a stable future between the two of them. But, at least in that moment, she was still the same D'yaabl that Putnam knew. The wall that constituted a big part of her being was broken, but not destroyed, to put it poetically.

The first phase of the fall of Zerkura consisted of recovering their belongings (as what they had obtained from the dead soldiers was not enough), acquiring supplies (as they could barely sustain themselves with what they hunted and gathered from the oasis), and further training the exslaves they had while also liberating more.

To accomplish this, they divided into three groups. Lukasz, Fabio, and the Mardu would be responsible for training the slaves in combat. Putnam and D'yaabl would pose as soldiers to infiltrate their ranks, retrieve their confiscated belongings, and procure supplies. Meanwhile, the mages would serve as a distraction, causing chaos in the city to ensure that only a minimal number of soldiers were positioned in the so-called "White Fortress" (essentially the magic academy/headquarters of Zerkura's soldiers). Additionally, a part of the former slaves whom D'yaabl had briefly trained would venture to the areas where slaves were still held, taking advantage of the chaos created by the sorcerers to set them free.

Everyone agreed with the plan, as there was little else they could do in their situation. So, after securing everything, they swiftly put it into motion, resulting in a partial success. D'yaabl finally, once and for all, recovered the sword and acquired valuable items like a city map. However, two out of the four mages of the expedition, Stucco and Zavist, fell in combat during the distraction. Additionally, Putnam had not managed to retrieve Tubiel's medallion, which Nelea kept in her possession because she found it beautiful. Furthermore, the former slaves sent

to liberate those remaining succeeded in freeing some, although not all of them. To compound matters, the chaos caused the city's soldiers to increase their patrols around the oasis, posing a threat to their position. Since the soldiers originally believed that the escaped slaves had perished in the desert after their escape, unaware that they had taken refuge in the Great Oasis, something that they had using in their advantage to make this phase of the big plan of the fall of Zerzura.

So, once the first phase was completed, they proceeded to hide themselves better, both due to increased patrols and the valuable items they had obtained, and began the second phase, which would involve a direct attack on the city with a larger scale of looting.

This part took them more time. Firstly, they needed to lower the Zerzureans' sense of alertness and catch them off guard. Secondly, they had to thoroughly plan the looting/attack. And thirdly, they had to train the newly liberated slaves for this purpose.

Only after ensuring that every slave had become a competent soldier, despite all the challenges, did they commence the operation. The advantage of having non-human liberated slaves in the group, especially many with dyrian ancestry, it was that many of them possessed distinct animalistic characteristics. This would prove advantageous during the looting.

During the time leading up to the attack, the bond between Putnam and D'yaabl began its transformation into what it would become in Vineta and later the Tuyotuki Islands. Furthermore, they seized the opportunity to eliminate patrols that occasionally roamed the oasis, as it provided them with a means to acquire proper equipment for the "army" they were assembling. This action also had a positive impact as it instilled fear among the Zerzureans and gave rise to false rumors of a desert monster infiltrating the Great Oasis.

And finally, after a long time, the attack and looting commenced. The Zerzureans, living in such an isolated city, used to keep the city gates open but guarded. However, due to the rumors of an invincible "desert monster" infiltrating the Great Oasis and killing soldier patrols, they had started closing the gates at night. Therefore, they launched the attack at dusk, the perfect moment for it. The gates would still be guarded, and the cover of darkness would be in their favor. They divided into four groups, each consisting of an equal number of members. One group was assigned to each gate. The teams at the northern and southern gates focused primarily on looting and, if possible, eliminating the city-state's monarchy. Meanwhile, the teams at the western and eastern gates aimed to eliminate soldiers, liberate any remaining slaves, and provide medical assistance if needed, as it was rumored that the Zerzureans had excessively exploited the remaining slaves due to the drastic reduction in their numbers. The group at the north gate was led by D'yaabl, the one at the south gate by Putnam. Fabio led the group at the east gate, and finally, Lukasz commanded the group at the west gate.

To Putnam, the idea of having to eliminate his own mother, regardless of the many wrongs she had committed, was deeply unsettling. Without disclosing his plan to anyone, he contemplated the possibility of engaging in a conversation with her instead of resorting to violence. He sensed that something was amiss, that her actions were not entirely of her own volition. Putnam believed that he could somehow assist her, and by doing so, also aid the city of Zerzura and its inhabitants. His intention was to persuade her to voluntarily abdicate her position as queen. He was certain that the revenge represented by the attack and looting carried out by the former slaves, including himself, would make her realize the extent of the harm she had caused and the inherent cruelty of slavery. He hoped that she would relinquish her current position and join the expedition. Although the city would be left in ruins, he firmly believed that sooner or later, a new king or

queen would emerge to rebuild it and usher in a new era of prosperity, one that did not exploit individuals, whether they were foreign humans or non-human beings, as mere objects. Like so many other times, he was wrong. Since Nelea, like Brehen, was beyond salvation, if his mother teach him anything before she died, it would be the importance of always striving to think objectively and setting personal feelings aside. It was a challenging task, but not an impossible one.

The attack and looting proved successful for the other groups as they acquired newfound wealth, freed the remaining slaves, and served as a long-awaited form of justice for the centuries of enslavement imposed by the Zerzureans. Undoubtedly, there were civilian and former slave casualties, for perfection cannot always be attained. However, in Putnam's case, success did not solely hinge on minimizing losses or amassing plunder, both of which he accomplished adeptly. His true challenge lay in accomplishing his other objective: the overthrow of Zerzura's monarchy.

As you can imagine, he found himself compelled to take the life of his own mother. Initially, as intended, he attempted negotiation while simultaneously seeking to reclaim the Tubiel cat medallion in her possession after realizing that she was its current holder. However, it was precisely this pursuit, due to the significance the medallion held for him, that forced him to confront her directly. The negotiation for her abdication swiftly deteriorated into a heated dispute over the medallion, ultimately leading to a fateful duel between mother and son.

It was an intense duel, somewhat reminiscent of Vargos' confrontation with Putnam's brother three years earlier. Spells from Nelea clashed with the Witcher's signs, while Putnam's steel saber countered his mother's staff. Putnam persisted in trying to reason with her, but his efforts proved futile. It seemed as though fate was playing a cruel joke on him, bringing her back only to snatch her away once more. Consequently, Putnam held back, and Nelea nearly succeeded in killing him, leaving him severely wounded before the tides turned. Only in the final moments, while desperately defending himself, did he unintentionally deliver the fatal blow, piercing her throat with his saber.

What followed was painful, a mixture of the grief he had experienced after Tubiel's death and the anguish of having to take the life of the woman who gave him birth. It was true that he had barely known her, and Matlena had been more of a mother to him in terms of upbringing, but the pain still cut deep. They had formed a bond, one he had hoped to delve into further despite the circumstances. And yet, life had cruelly snatched her away right before his eyes. The shock of the situation left him almost oblivious to the Royal Palace being engulfed in flames. He came dangerously close to perishing there, holding his mother in his arms, if not for D'yaabl. Who, filled with concern, she had gone in search of him and ultimately saved him from that horrific fate.

The kingdom of Ketu Rahu (September 20 - November 20, 1283)

"Talking to the slaves we liberated in Zerzura, I realized that they too are familiar with the rare and intriguing Dyrians. Some of them even mentioned that they have at least one ancestor from this race, who originated from a distant kingdom known as Ketu Rahu, where they lived and thrived. Perhaps it is because of this that we rarely see them in the North anymore."

—Fabio Sachs, Unpublished notes of the 1282 Expedition (Vol.1)

After the fall of Zerzura and inquiring about the mysterious [Okami Islands](#), the expedition, following the recommendations of the liberated slaves before the two groups separated, set course for the country of [Ketu Rahu](#). They retraced their steps and returning to the region of Bia Thin, finally learning its name. In the future, Fabio would convey this knowledge to the Nordlings through his works. At that moment, Putnam and D'yaabl were on the verge of parting ways. Since D'yaabl had a desire to return to the North, but the bond she had formed with

Putnam and how it had evolved compelled her to stay with him and join the expedition, despite Fabio's complaints.

Unfortunately, they were unable to transport any of the ships from the so-called Red Sea. As a result, their journey back to Bia Thin to reach Ketu Rahu took a considerable amount of time. To be more precise, the entire summer passed before they finally arrived in the capital, which also shared its name with the kingdom. It was also during this period that they also made the decision to set sail for the [Tuyotuki Islands](#). The curiosity to uncover more about these islands had been ignited by Kai Yih's subtle allusions and the intriguing tales recounted by some of the liberated slaves. Also during the journey to Ketu Rahu, Putnam's swords suffered irreparable damage, leaving them completely useless. This unfortunate outcome was partly a consequence of the intense duel he had engaged in with Nelea. The duel had already compromised the condition of his swords, and subsequent encounters with bandits and other threats inflicted additional harm, rendering them beyond repair.

As they reached Vineta, the expedition explored the capital city and its surroundings, discovering why the freed slaves had spoken so highly of the country and recommended it. The people of the kingdom proved to be welcoming and hospitable, and the kingdom itself was peaceful and prosperous. After the hardships they had faced in Buyan and the White City, the expedition was grateful for the opportunity to rest, recover, replenish their supplies, and acquire a ship and an experienced guide who could take them to the Tuyotuki Islands. They accomplished this by selling some of the valuables they had salvaged from the fall of Zerkura. Despite the language barrier, as most of them did not speak the Dyrian dialect, the expedition was well taken care of, thanks to Istredd, who was familiar with a more primitive version of the language from his archaeological work.

Putnam, for example, acquired the White Tiger of the West Armor, which he would wear until his arrival on the Tuyotuki Islands, as well as the Nine-Tailed Vixen Steel and Silver Swords set. He also had his [Zerrikanian Repeating Crossbow](#) repaired, which had also been damaged in Zerkura, although to a lesser extent. However, the Ketunian blacksmiths lacked the knowledge to repair his Scorpion Steel Saber and Griffin Silver Sword. As a result, Putnam had to rely on the new sword set, which was given to him as a gift after being recognized as a witcher, despite not belonging to any of the schools known to the local blacksmiths. These swords also would be used by Putnam during his time on the Tuyotuki Islands.

During their stay in Ketu Rahu, the expedition had to carefully consider the weather conditions before embarking on their journey to the Tuyotuki Islands. The monsoon season was coming to an end, but the lingering heavy rains and strong winds still posed a threat at sea. They deemed it unsafe to set sail during the post-monsoon period, which, although relatively safe on land, presented dangers on the open water. Therefore, they made the decision to wait for more favorable weather, spending approximately two months in the kingdom. During this time, they focused on recuperating and preparing for the challenges that lay ahead. They also took advantage of the opportunity to engage with the people of Ketu Rahu, immersing themselves in the local culture and customs. This experience had a profound impact on Fabio, who dedicated himself to meticulous revisions of the notes he had taken. These revised notes would later be published posthumously by his son in various books recounting the expedition.

During their prolonged stay in Ketu Rahu, the relationship between Putnam and D'yaebi began to flourish and solidify, albeit to a limited extent. The true depth and significance of their bond, however, would only become fully apparent during their time in the Tuyotuki Islands. The extended period of time they spent together in Vineta allowed them to gradually become more open and comfortable in each other's presence. As they shared their experiences, fears, and aspirations, their connection evolved into a more formal and stable relationship.

Furthermore, the bonds of friendship also grew stronger between Putnam and Istredd during their stay in Ketu Rahu. What initially started as a cordial respect between the witcher and the mage transformed into a profound and genuine friendship. The ample time they spent together in Ketu Rahu fostered a deeper understanding and appreciation for one another.

While the camaraderie between Putnam and Istredd may not have reached the same level of intimacy as that between Putnam and Fabio, it was a significant shift in their relationship. Both Putnam and Istredd were able to transcend their past differences and prejudices. Putnam, who had harbored deep-rooted biases against mages due to his upbringing in Kaer Seren, among other experiences like for example Herna, gradually let go of his preconceptions. The traumatic loss of Tubiel had further solidified these prejudices, but his time in Ketu Rahu allowed him to challenge and eventually release them.

Similarly, Istredd chose to put aside any lingering grudges he may have held against witchers. Despite his previous encounters with Geralt, which had left a mark on his perception of witchers, Istredd recognized the opportunity for growth and understanding. In Ketu Rahu, he embraced the chance to form a genuine connection with Putnam, setting aside past animosities and embracing a more open-minded perspective.

During the expedition's stay in Ketu Rahu, Putnam took advantage of the opportunity to engage in witcher contracts. Occasionally, he was accompanied by either D'yaabl or Lukasz, but most often it was D'yaabl who joined him. These contracts provided an avenue for Putnam to test and refine his skills with the new, lighter swords he now wielded. By accepting these contracts, Putnam also expressed his gratitude to the people of Ketu Rahu for their hospitality and generosity towards the expedition. He frequently chose either not to charge them or to significantly reduce his fees, much to D'yaabl's amusement, who playfully teased him about his "heroic attitude" whenever he did so.

Through these contracts, Putnam encountered various local monsters. One notable encounter involved an ottasaunk, a specter known for its strong attachments to objects or places. Another contract involved a brupamor, a distant relative of the kikimores, which had abducted a priestess of [Wijun](#). Putnam also faced a magan, a crocodile-like creature with a prehensile snout and a highly armored back but a vulnerable underbelly, among other monsters. These experiences enabled Putnam to acquire valuable knowledge and skills that would prove advantageous during their time on the Tuyotuki Islands.

However, the most remarkable aspect of the expedition's passage through Ketu Rahu was the revelation made by Fabio Sachs. He was finally able to validate the authenticity of one of the legends among the Nordlings of the distant eastern kingdoms brought by Zangvebariand and Zerrkanian traders, more specifically, about Vineta. This revelation stemmed from his realization that the Zerrikanian sources that tell of Vineta had suffered a mistranslation into Common. In truth, these sources referred to the kingdom of Ketu Rahu, not Vineta. Vineta was an invention resulting from the mistranslation. This discovery was made possible through the acquisition of information regarding Ketukian Dyrian myths, which closely aligned with the legends circulating in the Northern Kingdoms about Vineta. So, with that, the expedition proved that, despite everything, the kingdom of Vineta was not a myth; it just had the wrong name among Nordlings.

Tuyotuki Islands (December, 1283 - December, 1284)

"Every island we hit was a mix of adventure and frustration. We kept running into more trouble than answers, but we pressed on. Persistence pays off, or so they say."

—Fabio Sachs, Chronicles of the Far East Vol.1

After the waters of the post-monsoon period had calmed, the expedition embarked on their journey towards the Tuyotuki Islands. They sailed into what Fabio Sachs dubbed the "[East Sea](#)," while the Nilfgaardians referred to it as Mare Sgàthan, which meant "mirror sea" in reference to its remarkably clear waters compared to the Great Sea. The voyage proved relatively peaceful, although they encountered sporadic attacks from eastern vodyanoi and other sea monsters. However, with the combined skills of the two witchers and the witcheress, they effectively dispatched these threats, adapting quickly to face unfamiliar adversaries.

It was during this eventful journey that Putnam found himself in a challenging situation. Based in one of the ship's captain inventions, he decided to utilize a prototype of a "diving suit." This innovation, later employed by the witchers of the school he would establish, became a crucial asset. At a critical moment when Putnam had depleted his stock of Killer Whale potion vials, he was faced with the daunting task of confronting an umibōzu. This formidable creature threatened to destroy the ship before they could reach Tawalisi, the main island of the archipelago. Although the diving suit was rudimentary at best and lacked proper oxygen supply, it served its purpose, allowing Putnam to navigate the depths and confront the umibōzu, overcoming the challenge and ensuring their safe passage.

This experience not only highlighted Putnam's resourcefulness but also underscored the adaptability and ingenuity of witchers in facing unforeseen obstacles, becoming an integral part of the School of the Crane practices, showcasing the ongoing evolution and incorporation of new techniques and equipment.

The journey to the Tuyotuki Islands by ship lasted approximately one month, which was the standard duration for the voyage from Ketu Rahu to the main island of the archipelago. If they had chosen to travel to one of the southern islands, the journey would have likely been shortened to around two weeks. They arrived on December 20, 1283, just one day before the official start of winter, both in the Tuyotuki Islands and the Northern Kingdoms. Specifically, their destination was the port of Odaiba, a former islet that had been artificially connected to the island of Tawalisi, transforming it into a bustling port. Odaiba had emerged from the collaboration between the Nilfgaardians and the Tuyotukians shortly after their initial contacts and treaties. Over the decades, it had grown to become the main port in the archipelago known to the Nilfgaardians as the "Eastern Empire."

The port was vibrant and teeming with people from diverse backgrounds. It was not only populated by the Tuyotukians but also attracted Zerrikanians, Biathians, and, to a lesser extent, Nilfgaardians (due to the distance between the Nilfgaardian colony of [Sabana](#) and the Tuyotuki Islands) and Melukkans. Occasionally, Zangvebarian traders could be spotted as well. This diverse presence played a crucial role in easing the cultural shock and facilitating their adaptation to the new surroundings. It also provided them with ample opportunities to seek assistance and support in this unfamiliar country.

But this promising start would soon be shattered, preventing them from carrying out many of their planned activities. Similar to their experiences in Valkare, Buyan, and Zertzura, they had arrived in Tawalisi during a tumultuous period. Tensions were high among the different clans, provinces, and even islands, which had been building up for years and eventually erupted into a civil war, which started, unfortunately, just hours after they set foot on land.

The civil war erupted just as the Emperor was visiting the port on his way to meet the Nilfgaardian ambassador. The location was suddenly besieged by unknown forces, resulting in the tragic deaths of everyone present except for the members of the expedition. As the Tuyotukian imperial authorities arrived and discovered them as the survivors, they swiftly cast blame upon expedition, quickly turning

them into scapegoats for the Emperor's demise. The expected language barrier did not ease the situation; instead, it exacerbated the misunderstandings and Putnam found himself crucified once again, reliving the anguish of false accusations, though this time with less justification than in Zerrikania.

The expedition endured grueling days, subjected to the cruel crucifixion and exposed to the harsh Tuyotukian tropical weather, surpassing even Putnam's previous ordeal in Zerrikania. However, a glimmer of hope emerged when the witchers of the [School of the Dragon](#) made the courageous decision to form a separate faction within the ongoing civil war and rescue them, primarily to hear their account of the events that transpired. Their allegiance, akin to their predecessor school, the School of the Manticore, lay with the royal family, specifically with the Emperor. With his demise, they decided to remain impartial, withholding their alliance with any faction or self-proclaimed emperor until the truth surrounding his death was uncovered. What was abundantly clear, though, was that the foreigners were not responsible.

The language barrier was also a problem to communicate with these witchers, albeit to a lesser extent, since they not only spoke Tuyotukian, which served as the lingua franca of the islands, but also their own language that had emerged a few decades after Gilgamesh's arrival and the founding of the school. This language was exclusively used among the witchers themselves and was a creole incorporating elements of Tuyotukian, the Nordling Common Tongue, and the Zerrikani Dialect. Grammatically, it was on par with the Nordling Common Tongue and also comprising 40% of its vocabulary, while 30% came from Tuyotukian and another 30% from the [Zerrikani Dialect](#).

The only "alliance," so to speak, that the witchers of the School of the Dragon would form, at least at that moment, was with the expedition once it had recovered, and proper communication could take place. If anything became a common ground between the two groups, it was their shared desire to uncover the truth regarding the Emperor's death. The expedition couldn't leave the islands because the ports allowing passage for foreign ships had been closed due to the conflict. In fact, the Dragon Witchers already had a plan in mind, which involved seeking out a geomancer named Hoseki, one of the few remaining Aen Hagde on the islands. They believed that her abilities would be instrumental in objectively unraveling the mystery behind the Emperor's death, bringing peace to the departed ruler, and potentially putting an end to the recently ignited civil war.

The Tuyotukian Civil War / Investigating the murder of the Emperor 💎

The expedition was taken to the fortress of the School of the Dragon, known as Watadzumi no haka (translated as "the tomb of Watatsumi"), where they could recover under favorable conditions, among other things. Initially, the expedition disagreed with the plan of the Dragon Witchers, deeming it too risky and ineffective due to its reliance on a single person. However, they eventually came to accept it. The primary reason for their change of heart was their limited knowledge of this distant land, with only fleeting glimpses gained throughout their journey, as previously mentioned. It required a leap of faith, as they placed their complete trust in their saviors.

It should be noted that several members of the expedition were fascinated by these secluded and virtually unknown witchers. Although they were not at their best after the "[Draconid Uprising](#)," they were in a much better state compared to other schools. To illustrate this, one could say they were in a similar state to the School of the Wolf after the Cats' betrayal in the Witcher's Tournament. Lukasz, in particular, became captivated and would eventually join the School of the Dragon. Istredd, on the other hand, was equally fascinated, as the existence of this school further supported his hypothesis regarding the Witcher Migrations.

As for Putnam, after being able to communicate effectively with them, he got

along well with everyone. In his opinion, they blended the best qualities of the Manticore and Griffin schools. He was even tempted to join their school, but ultimately dismissed the idea. His friendship and loyalty to Fabio Sachs weighed more heavily.

In addition to the primary plan of searching for Hoseki, the witchers of the School of the Dragon devised several backup plans. These plans served as alternative approaches to address the situation they found themselves in. One such plan involved actively listening to the pleas and requests of the various clans involved in the conflict. The Dragon Witchers positioned themselves as intermediaries, seeking to mediate and find common ground among the warring factions. Their goal was to facilitate communication and foster understanding in order to minimize the potential casualties of the civil war. By taking on this role, they aimed to bring about a peaceful resolution and pave the way for the selection of a new emperor who could restore stability to the islands.

However, recognizing the complexity of the situation, the Dragon Witchers also had another contingency plan in place. This plan involved a more direct and confrontational approach. They were prepared to face the leaders of the clans head-on, engaging in battles and confrontations to defeat them and uncover the truth behind the emperor's death. By interrogating the defeated leaders, they hoped to uncover the culprit responsible for the destabilization of the empire. This plan, although riskier, was seen as a necessary measure to ensure justice and bring about a resolution to the conflict as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, despite their strategic thinking and efforts, these backup plans did not yield the desired outcomes for the Hogo-sha (Tuyotukian name for the Dragon Witchers, meaning "Guardians" as they protect the people for the yokais) and the expedition. Instead, they faced further losses and setbacks. Assassinations, duels, and the ongoing civil war took their toll on the Dragon Witchers and their mission. The complexity of the political landscape and the deep-rooted tensions within the clans proved to be formidable challenges that could not be easily overcome.

The search for Hoseki would take time. That's why the other backup plans were put into motion. No one knew the whereabouts of the elf, as she would appear and disappear at her own will, offering her services sporadically. It was highly likely that they would have to travel from village to village, from city to city, and even from island to island, inquiring until they found her. And so it began, a journey that would span a long year, navigating through the complex situation of the civil war, and facing a multitude of dangers along the way, whether they be human or monstrous.

Tawalisi 🏠

"Putnam found a puppy in the middle of a raid. Only he would think of saving a dog when arrows are flying. Named him Frey, like the god. Go figure."

—Fabio Sachs, Chronicles of the Far East Vol.1

Their time on the island of Tawalisi proved to be disappointingly unproductive when it came to finding any concrete leads on Hoseki's whereabouts. They only encountered stories and rumors about her extraordinary abilities as a geomancer and the wise counsel she provided to the local inhabitants. However, their luck changed when they reached a village nestled in the Horai Mountain, situated in the northern part of the island.

This village became the target of an unexpected attack orchestrated by the Sanzu Clan. The expedition, along with the Dragon Witchers, found themselves compelled to defend the village and its people. It was during this intense battle that they stumbled upon a significant revelation. They learned that several clans were also in search of Hoseki, although their motivations differed significantly from the expedition and Dragon Witcher's own. Whispers and hearsay suggested

that she might be hiding in the island of Tawarisi or even in Kami, located in the southern region of the empire.

These clans, driven by self-interest, hoped to purchase Hoseki and exploit her abilities to their advantage.

Their ultimate goal was to install a new emperor from their own clan, while also blaming their rival clans for the Emperor's demise, effectively eliminating them from the political landscape.

Fabio and Putnam in the Tuyotuki Islands



The stakes were significantly raised, and the urgency to locate Hoseki grew even more pressing. The expedition, alongside the Dragon Witchers, now faced not only the daunting task of unraveling the truth behind the Emperor's death, but also finding and safeguarding Hoseki from falling into the wrong hands, and also thwarting the schemes of these various factions along the way.

By the way, it was during the defense of the Horai village that Putnam saved a newborn puppy, the lone survivor of its litter, from the flames. He adopted the puppy, naming him Frey in honor of the brother of the goddess he had begun to follow (more as a personal philosophy than a religion, it should be noted), Freyja, after Tubiel's death.

It is worth mentioning that news of the Dragon Witchers forming a separate neutral faction and their objectives spread rapidly throughout the archipelago. As a result, several clans also began searching for the almost legendary Hoseki and occasionally confronted the witchers due to their own interests.

Tawarisi

As the expedition and the Dragon Witchers embarked on their journey to the island of Tawarisi, the anticipation and curiosity grew. The island, situated to the east and approximately two days away, held a reputation as the "younger sister" of Tawalisi, sharing many similarities in its landscape and cultural heritage.

Tawarisi carried immense significance within the empire, serving as a vital granary due to its fertile lands and the generosity of its waters. It was a place of abundance and prosperity, a haven for agriculture and sustenance. The expedition members, including Putnam, D'yaebi, and their comrades, couldn't help but be captivated by the island's natural beauty and the sense of tranquility it exuded even when a civil war was happening.

Upon their arrival, it became evident why the Nilfgaardians had such a profound interest in the archipelago. Tawarisi appeared to be truly blessed by the gods, as the locals fervently believed. The land thrived, and the people lived in harmony with nature, reaping its bountiful rewards. It was a sight to behold, a testament to the island's importance and the power it held within the empire.

As the expedition delved deeper into Tawarisi's secrets, they discovered that its strategic value extended beyond its agricultural wealth. The island's geographical location made it a crucial stronghold, a gateway to the rest of the archipelago. Its control could provide a significant advantage in securing dominance over the entire region. The Nilfgaardians' interest in Tawarisi was not solely driven by its resources but also by its strategic position in their ambitions for a possible expansion through the Far East beyond the colony of Sabana. This possible expansion, fortunately, remained nothing more than plans that were not carried out after Emhyr's death.

In Tawarisi, their progress towards their objectives was limited but fruitful. As they traveled across the island, with the foreign and local witchers fulfilling contracts to defend the local population against the dangerous and powerful monsters that were abundant there, unlike in the North. Putnam (accompanied always by D'yaabl at that time and a young Frey) faced monsters such as a [kappa](#), an akugyo, a basan, a baku, and many others, earning the duo of the Griffin and the Snow Leopard a good reputation in the islands and in the process finally solidifying their relationship after so much time and so many clashes they had had. Ironically, thanks to having put their differences aside in the middle of the unknown.

Amidst their encounters, they managed to uncover two significant clues. One was discovered with the assistance of the locals, after having solved a problem with a ubume while the other was stumbled upon during their investigation and cleaning of a battlefield infested with [tuyotukian ghouls](#). It was there that they came across a gravely wounded soldier who claimed to have witnessed the elf woman.

The first clue was related to the mystery of the Emperor's death and revolved around the destruction of the training center of the Onna-musha, the Emperor's personal female guard, caused by a mysterious fire. This revelation shed light on why the Emperor was left unprotected on his way to meet with the Nilfgaardian ambassador. It was likely that news of the fire had reached his ears, and believing that the port was safe enough, the Emperor sent the Onna-musha to Tawarisi to assist their sister warriors and salvage what they could from the ruins. This decision left the ruler completely defenseless.

The second clue, although just as vague as the first one regarding Hoseki's whereabouts, held great significance as it narrowed down their search. It revealed that Hoseki was not on Tawarisi, but rather hidden within the ruins of an ancient temple dedicated to the worship of dragons. These forbidden cults had been destroyed and outlawed for centuries, especially since the establishment of Emperor worship.

Their search presented a daunting challenge as they had to meticulously explore one ruin after another in their quest to find her, even if it meant venturing into the other islands within the archipelago. Thus, they divided into groups and embarked on a thorough exploration of the diverse ruins scattered across Tawarisi. Lukasz was accompanied by Eberhatt and a group of Dragon Witchers, including Faxicura and Jubei, which further fueled Lukasz's desire to join their school. Putnam, on the other hand, went with Fabio, D'yaabl, and Herardo. Additional groups were also formed and led by Istredd and the Mardu of the expedition, respectively. However, despite their efforts, they found no sign of Hoseki. Instead, their exploration exposed them to treacherous perils in the form of menacing monsters, intricate traps, and long-buried secrets that were best left undisturbed.

Undeterred, their determination to locate Hoseki compelled them to extend their journey throughout the entire archipelago, moving from one island to another in pursuit of the elusive elf and the truth she could reveal regarding the death of the Emperor.

Journey through the rest of the islands

After their time in Tawarisi, the expedition continued to travel through the remaining 10 islands that comprised the archipelago. During this time, the relationship between D'yaabl and Putnam continued to evolve and improve, despite their notable differences. They mutually proved to each other, after denying it for a long time, that the good qualities they saw in one another were true and helped them become better, rebuilding themselves by supporting each other.

Ironically, coming from someone whose nickname translated to "the devil,"

D'yaubl taught Putnam that he was not a burden to anyone. He simply needed to find a place where his "things" fit, not in the idealized sense of a soulmate but in a more realistic way, just as D'yaubl had done with him, even though she couldn't see it for a long time herself. This lesson, like many others, would take time to take effect, albeit less time than before. Because life had another surprise in store for the witcher, one that would test him once again. It was yet another addition to the long list of tribulations that would sanctify him in the future.

Their journey through the rest of the islands was anything but tranquil, as they experienced multiple adventures and misadventures along the way. However, the main source of their unease was not that; it was the fact that, despite their efforts to avoid the civil war and focus on finding Hoseki, they inevitably became entangled in it one way or another beyond their initial unpleasant experience. They often found themselves acting as an external force, opposing the warring factions. In essence, they could be described as vigilantes, much to D'yaubl's equal parts dismay and amusement.

In addition to the turmoil of the war, they faced the time-consuming task of investigating and sometimes clearing out monsters from each ruin they encountered in their search for the elf. Many of these ruins turned out to be dead ends, further frustrating and discouraging them. Nonetheless, they persisted, driven by their determination to bring the war to a swift end, knowing that the other Dragon Witchers assigned to carry out backup plans had not achieved success.

Thus, it could be said that their journey was overall frustrating, despite the curiosity sparked by the expedition's unknown and exotic surroundings. However, they made progress in their search despite the slow pace. They even managed to acquire allies along the way who proved quite useful in achieving their objectives. One ally stood out in particular—a samebito who saved Putnam's life by preventing the witcher from drowning. It turned out that this [samebito](#) was a close friend of Hoseki and provided them with a clue to her definitive whereabouts. It confirmed that she was on the island of Kami, specifically in pursuit of one of the ["eastern dragons"](#) as Istredd would later name the species for the Nordlings, this "eastern dragon" was called [Shenlong](#) or Shinryu, depending on whom you asked.

The reasons for seeking out such a powerful creature remained unknown, even to the samebito. However, based on his knowledge of Hoseki, he speculated that she was likely going to make an offering to the dragon in exchange for a favor. Perhaps she intended to request the unleashing of a powerful storm on the islands to wipe out the humans, taking advantage of their self-destructive conflict, thus allowing a new reign of the Aen Hagde after the "cleansing".

This added greater urgency to their search. They not only had to end the war as quickly as possible but also had to persuade Hoseki to help them investigate who was responsible for the Emperor's death. Additionally, they needed to prevent her from convincing the mighty dragon to essentially unleash an apocalypse upon the islands.

D'yaubl's death

"Losing D'yaubl was a gut punch. She sacrificed herself for us, and that's a debt we can never repay. Her death changed Putnam in ways I can't even begin to describe."

—Fabio Sachs, Chronicles of the Far East Vol.1

But that wouldn't be the worst, not for Putnam, as he had already faced significant threats such as the mages of Ofir, among others, although none on the same scale as this. The dragon had the potential to go beyond the Tuyotuki Islands and unleash a true catastrophe in the most horrifying of scenarios. However, the greatest tragedy for Putnam would undoubtedly be the loss of

D'yaebi, the newfound chance at happiness in his life, snatched away once again with their future plans vanishing into oblivion. Her death would leave a lasting mark on his conscience, adding to the list of traumas he had already endured and causing a setback in his recovery and also in his relationship with Jolanta until around 1381, making their encounter in Vinland a mere glimpse of what could be in the future.

D'yaebi's demise would occur in April 1284, in a manner that even the pre-Putnam D'yaebi, the ruthless and amoral witcheress, would have found repulsive—through sacrifice. Specifically, she bravely confronted an oni that was about to deliver the final blow to an injured Putnam and Fabio, stepping in to protect them. Her selfless act demonstrated the profound changes she had undergone and how, in the end, she found redemption.

Deeply affected by the loss, Putnam would strive to continue the journey to the best of his abilities. However, before doing so, he would ensure that D'yaebi received a dignified farewell—a funeral that honored her memory. In an intimate ceremony attended only by him and Fabio, she would be laid to rest beneath a blossoming cherry tree, surrounded by all her belongings, including the cherished sword she had fought so fiercely for.

Solving the conflict and cleaning their name ✨

"As we left the Tuyotuki Islands, I couldn't help but feel a mix of relief and anticipation. We were heading home, but we'd left a piece of ourselves in that land. The journey had changed us all"

—Fabio Sachs, Chronicles of the Far East Vol.1

And finally, after that long journey through the Eastern Empire (which had lasted almost a year), they found her, specifically in the ancient ruins located in the underground lake within the extinct volcano of Usu, near the coast, where it was said that the dragon Shenlong had once resided. It was the month of November 1284.

The subsequent encounter between the expedition, accompanied by the Dragon Witchers, and Hoseki could be classified as complicated. Although Hoseki was acquainted with the Dragon Witchers who were part of the group and had even developed a semblance of friendship with some of them, she sensed their purpose and was unwilling to cooperate. She also had some knowledge of Putnam, albeit only through hearsay and his nickname. The ensuing battle was not a physical one per se but rather a battle of words, as they tried to persuade her to reconsider her intentions for the greater good, relying on the speculations shared by the samebito, which unfortunately proved to be accurate.

All of these events transpired due to the fortunate timing of their arrival, coinciding with the moment when Hoseki's offerings and prayers began to take effect, rousing the dragon from its centuries-long slumber in that place after humans had ceased to worship him and turned their devotion to their Emperor instead.

Hoseki argued that humans only knew how to destroy everything, and how every place they set foot on, which was once a paradise, including the Tuyotuki Islands themselves as an example, turned into a horrible place. She believed that eradicating them from the face of the Earth with the power of the dragon was necessary. On the other hand, the expedition argued that although humanity could commit terrible acts and take time to learn from their mistakes, they were also capable of creating beautiful things, bringing about change, and creating paradises even for those who were different from them.

As the words of Hoseki and the expedition echoed in the air, the atmosphere grew tense, and the fate of their encounter hung in the balance. Each argument carried weight, exposing the complexities of human nature. The clash of

perspectives seemed insurmountable, threatening to prolong the impasse indefinitely.

But then, a subtle change began to ripple through the dormant form of Shenlong. As his immense body stirred, the ancient dragon's consciousness awakened, casting a profound presence over the assembly. With a majestic aura emanating from his being, Shenlong projected an air of wisdom and authority that commanded attention.

He listened intently to the arguments presented, observing the conflicting viewpoints with an acute understanding of human nature. Gradually, his piercing gaze scanned the faces of those gathered, peering into their very souls. Shenlong's magic allowed him to delve into their thoughts and emotions, unraveling their true intentions.

The revelations that flooded his mind were a tapestry of human desires, fears, and aspirations. He saw the potential for darkness, but also glimpsed the sparks of goodness that ignited within individuals like Putnam. The witcher's complex journey, with its triumphs and failures, provided a microcosm of humanity's capacity for both greatness and fallibility.

In a moment of clarity, Shenlong raised his colossal head, his voice resonating like thunder across the chamber. He recounted the tales of Putnam's exploits, illustrating the transformative power of choice and the indomitable spirit that could emerge from even the darkest corners of the human heart.

With his words, Shenlong sought to bridge the divide between Hoseki's disillusionment and the expedition's belief in the potential for change. He affirmed that while humans were indeed capable of destruction, they also possessed the innate ability to create, to learn from their mistakes, and to cultivate harmony even with those who were different.

Hoseki's heart was heavy with disappointment, for she had clung to the belief that the eradication of humanity was the only path to salvation. However, amidst that disappointment, a flicker of hope ignited within her. Perhaps Shenlong, with his ancient wisdom and unfathomable power, held a deeper understanding of the world and its possibilities. After that, the dragon, for his part, simply told her to assist them, assuring her that she would soon witness the truth of his words. And with that, he flew out of the volcano, never to be seen again.

Placing her trust in the colossal dragon, Hoseki resolved to assist the expedition and see where this newfound path would lead. She yearned to witness the truth of Shenlong's words unfold before her very eyes, to discover if the humans could indeed rise above their destructive tendencies and create a world of harmony and beauty.

After that, the expedition, the Dragon Witchers, and Hoseki departed from Kami once again and made their way to Okami. Their primary objective was to allow Hoseki to employ her geomancer abilities at the site where the Imperial Majesty had been slain, in order to unveil the identity of the perpetrators.

In a short span of time, Hoseki revealed that the ones responsible for the Emperor's demise and the tragic events at the port were none other than a ninja clan led by Kumawakamaru. Motivated by a deep-seated thirst for revenge, Kumawakamaru and his followers sought retribution against the Emperor for the execution of Kumawakamaru's father, who had held the position of the Emperor's trusted right-hand. Allegations of corruption had prompted the Emperor to issue the fatal order.

Armed with solid evidence, courtesy of Hoseki's findings, the expedition proceeded to visit the governing regency. They presented the irrefutable proof,

compelling the regency to issue a warrant for the capture of the ninja clan. The regency promptly disseminated this information to the warring clans, resulting in an immediate cessation of hostilities. The clans united their forces, pledging to collaborate in the pursuit and capture of Kumawakamaru, who was swiftly apprehended alongside his allies. Justice prevailed, and the perpetrators met their rightful fate through execution.

And for the expedition, having successfully halted the civil war, they found their lost honor restored and received heartfelt gratitude for their pivotal role in bringing about peace. Their remarkable efforts were recognized, and they were bestowed with a bountiful reward, a token of appreciation for their bravery and dedication. The expedition tried to get a new commercial treaty after that, but unfortunately, it did not succeed. However, they had already located that territory, so perhaps in the future, the kingdom of Lyria and Rivia, through other people, could somehow trade with the eastern empire and benefit from it.

And so, with the passage of a few weeks, the ports of the Tuyotuki Islands once again opened their gates, warmly welcoming foreign ships and revitalizing trade and cultural exchange. Meanwhile, the expedition prepared to depart from the country, embarking on their journey back to the Northern Kingdoms. They carried with them a wealth of lived experiences, valuable treasures obtained during their voyage through the Far East, and the commercial treaties they had forged along the way, thus marking the conclusion of Fabio Sachs' planned first expedition. This extraordinary undertaking served to illuminate the world for the Nordlings, enriching their knowledge and understanding of distant lands and diverse cultures.

In the wake of the expedition's departure, the Tuyotuki Islands underwent a significant transformation. They embraced a brief but pivotal change, embracing an elective monarchy system, empowering the nation to select a new ruling dynasty capable of steering the empire towards a prosperous future. This momentous decision held the promise of a fresh chapter, inspiring hope and anticipation among the eastern islanders as they embarked on a path of renewal and progress.

Return from the Far East (December 1284 - May 1285)

The journey back to the Northern Kingdoms from the Tuyotuki Islands lasted a couple of months, though shorter than expected, thanks to the experience of the captain of the Nilfgaardian Merchant Ship they traveled on. However, not everyone returned with them. Aside from those who perished on the islands, such as D'yaebi, others, like Lukasz, as mentioned before, chose to stay behind, claiming that they had found their place after all this time and had nothing left to return to in the North. Lukasz had no intention of going back to Zerrikania either, as while his time there had been good, it had also been empty.

The School of the Wolf was extinct, and Kaer Morhen was nothing more than abandoned ruins. Moreover, the number of monsters in the North was dwindling. It didn't justify his return. Additionally, he had developed a fascination with the Tuyotuki Islands, their culture, and their people. Furthermore, the Dragon Witchers needed new members to accelerate their recovery following the "Draconid Uprising" and the civil war. Joining them appeared to be an ideal choice after all the experiences he had gone through, not only during the expedition, and on the islands but also throughout his life. This was his opportunity to start anew, find happiness, and rediscover himself after a long period of being lost. He didn't want to let it slip away.

The expedition felt a sense of loss upon parting ways with Lukasz, as he had not only been a valuable asset but also a dear friend. Nevertheless, they respected his decision and bid him a final farewell.

Stopover in Sabana to replenish supplies (March - April 1285)

After Fabio Sachs' 1282 expedition decided to return home after almost three years of traveling the Far East, they were forced to make a stop on the island of Sabana to replenish supplies, remaining there for a month. They stopped in the colony town of New Cintra, where the only port in good condition was available after a hurricane.

During their extended stay on the island, the expedition diligently utilized their time to repair their ship, ensuring its seaworthiness for the long voyage ahead. They sought out skilled craftsmen from the local population, who with their expertise and resourcefulness, helped restore the vessel to its former glory. With every plank mended and every sail patched, the ship stood ready to brave the treacherous seas once more.

Restocking their supplies was of utmost importance to sustain the crew's physical well-being. The explorers scoured the island, seeking out the finest provisions available. They ventured into bustling markets, where vibrant colors and exotic aromas filled the air. The expedition members engaged in spirited bartering, striking deals with local merchants to acquire an array of essentials, from fresh fruits and vegetables to preserved rations, ensuring a sufficient stockpile for their journey.

Yet, their interactions extended beyond mere transactions. The expedition fostered a genuine curiosity for the island's rich history and diverse culture. They delved into the annals of the island's past, visiting local museums and immersing themselves in the artifacts and tales that spoke of its heritage. With open minds and attentive ears, they sought the wisdom of the island's residents, listening to their narratives and legends that intertwined with the very fabric of the land. Some members of the expedition even took the time to learn some of the island's indigenous languages.

Putnam, on the other hand, was dedicated to making contracts against local monsters despite having zero knowledge about them. Which, unwittingly, would lead him to have another of the multiple romances he had throughout his life that would add to his fame as a Don Juan and romantic hero.

The Return and Preparation for New Horizons (April 1285 -March 1286)

"The success of the book made it a lot easier to secure funding for the next expedition. Even the Kovirian Crown, which had previously turned me down, approached me with an offer"

—Fabio Sachs

Fabio and the rest of the expedition members, upon returning to the Northern Kingdoms, naturally first went to Queen Meve in Lyria and Rivia with the trade agreements they had secured as proof of their success. During the journey, they distributed the wealth they had acquired equally among themselves. Additionally, they shared equally the money that Meve unexpectedly gave them as a reward for securing so many agreements in recognition of their tremendous effort. Afterward, each member went on to pursue their own endeavors: Istredd returned to his excavations, Eberhatt went back to his clinic in Novigrad, and Putnam set off to address several pending matters.

Once the meeting with Meve was over, Fabio returned to his wife Erin, adding the acquired riches to the family fortune they were building. This wealth would prove helpful for both Fabio's last expedition and the founding of The Company by one of Fabio's brothers—an important commercial and transport company between the Old Continent and the Western Continent, which Fabio was yet to discover.

During this period, prior to his second expedition—which would begin sooner rather than later in March of 1286, as his thirst for exploration could not be contained—Erin became pregnant with their two kids, a daughter and a son. They decided to name the kids Tubiel Sachs and Putnam Sachs respectively.

It was also during this time, between April 1285 and March 1286, that Fabio published his magnum opus, a book titled *Chronicles of the Far East Vol. 1*. Based on Fabio's diaries from the journey, the book detailed stories, cultures, people, monsters, plants, and animals from that part of the world. In his later years, a second volume of the book would be released, followed by two volumes of unpublished notes. The meticulous documentation and engaging narrative style made it a riveting read, captivating audiences across the Northern Kingdoms and the Nilfgaardian Empire. This work catapulted him to fame for his discoveries and corroborations of the then-mysterious far eastern side of the Continent. It also brought indirect fame to his best friend Putnam Pitch, who featured prominently in the book, with many of his battles against monsters and other exploits frequently mentioned. Putnam's heroics, as chronicled by Fabio, began to turn him into a legendary figure, inspiring countless tales and songs.

The success of his book made it much easier for Fabio to secure funding for his second expedition, this time to the Far North, when the Kovirian Crown, which had previously rejected his Far East expedition, approached him with an offer.

Expedition to the Far North (1286 - 1288)

"Finding Putnam was a bit tricky, but we finally caught up with him in Thwyth after he defeated a vendigo. He didn't hesitate to join, feeling a need to escape his recent troubles"

—Fabio Sachs

After securing the necessary funding for his new expedition, the only remaining task for Fabio was to gather the people, which proved to be relatively easy. Many survivors from the previous expedition to the Far East eagerly joined once again, including Istredd, Eberhatt, and, of course, Putnam. Although locating the witcher was challenging due to the nature of his profession, they eventually found him in the city of Thwyth. His fame had spread after he successfully defeated a vendigo that had been terrorizing the locals and travelers passing through. Putnam immediately accepted the offer, driven not only by the debt he felt towards Fabio for saving his life and being his friend but also because, much like in late 1281 (albeit to a greater extent), he felt the need to break out of his comfort zone. This urge was mainly due to the traumatic abandonment he had suffered at the hands of his second wife.

The expedition also saw several new and interesting additions. One notable member was Jabolet, a mage and mutual friend of Istredd and the Kovirian Court Mage, Triss Merigold. Triss had suggested Jabolet after she declined Fabio's offer to join the expedition. During the journey, Jabolet formed a friendship with Putnam. Eventually, Jabolet became the mage of the School of the Crane, providing unique characteristics to these witchers through his study and experimentation with mutagens specific to the terrains in which they would combat monsters. Other notable members included Tugdual and Democritus of Ban Ard, two sorcerers, Bosco of Cidaris, a historian and linguist who was a friend of Jabolet and joined the expedition at his invitation, and finally, Kina of Aedirn, a mercenary recommended by Putnam's mercenary friend, Brynn, after she herself couldn't join due to personal matters.

With the team assembled and everything organized, the expedition to the Far North set off from Kovir at the end of March that year. Their journey aimed to unravel the mysteries of this remote part of the world, with their first destination being the [Duchy of Vinland](#), the only relatively well-known location in that region at the time by Nordlings.

The Amikuks Hunt of Vinland (Summer of 1286)

*"I never expected to see Jolanta here. Her being around is throwing me off.
It's hard to keep my head straight with everything between us"*
—Putnam to Fabio during the hunt

*"I get it, Jolanta's presence complicates things, but we have a job to do.
Focus is key"*
—Fabio answering to Putnam during the hunt

This time, thanks to the experience gained from their previous expedition and a stroke of luck, the journey began much more smoothly, and they arrived in Vinland in just three months, a significant reduction from the estimated five months. They saved considerable time by traveling in a drakkar alongside Skellige traders they encountered along the way, who happened to be heading towards Vinland as well.

Their objective in Vinland was twofold. First, to gather information about the area and verify the legends that reached the Northern Kingdoms with reality. Second, and more importantly, to secure a trade treaty with the diarchic duchy that would benefit Kovir. However, what seemed like a straightforward task became more complicated upon their arrival.

When they reached the capital, Hóp, they didn't know where to begin. They visited the former communal house, which had been transformed into the ducal palace, only to be told that the dukes were not present and had gone out. In search of information, they headed to the nearest tavern called "The Grey Snowball," unaware that they would find more than they had ever anticipated

The tavern itself was enormous, almost resembling a second "communal house," so to speak. It surpassed in size any other in the Northern Kingdoms, including those in Kovir. It boasted a hybrid architectural style, displaying a noticeable [Skræling](#) influence.

Upon entering, they were taken aback not only by its size but also by the bustling crowd and lively atmosphere. It was evident that something significant was happening, although they remained uncertain of the specifics. They secured a secluded table, ordered some food, and observed the scene, trying to gather more information. It wasn't until an elderly man, recognizing Putnam as a witcher, approached them that they finally discovered the nature of the event. This man was none other than Falmak, one of the two dukes who governed that diarchy—the most remote "Nordling" territory.

It turned out they had arrived in the midst of a severe political and social crisis. A plague of amikuks was ravaging the duchy, devastating crops, and attacking people. No one had been able to put an end to this plague, which created tensions between factions with a more Nordling mindset and those who did not share it. The Nordling faction accused the Skräling tribes of being responsible for the plague, fueled by the discrimination that the tribals still faced. Some within this faction even proposed exterminating the Skrälings as a solution to the problem. Despite the closure of mines and the blocking of other underground locations, these monsters continued to appear. On the other hand, the opposing faction argued that it was not the case and that they suffered from these monsters just as much. This faction also advocated for the promotion of cultural blending and syncretism with the Skräling tribes. In fact, Falmak had a Skräling wife and six sons of mixed heritage.

On that day, it seemed that all the teams had gathered there to finalize preparations before the tournament began. If they hadn't done so in a separate location, it was to provide everyone with the opportunity to switch teams if they wished, regardless of their reasons.

It turned out that Falmak had approached Putnam almost immediately, not only because the medallion with the eagle head evoked memories, but for a simple reason. The rival young duke's team had a significant advantage, and Falmak was deeply concerned until Putnam appeared as if he were a gift from [Wotan](#) himself. This advantage came in the form of a witcher, or rather, a witcheress of Redanian origin, as indicated by her accent. Falmak had tried to convince the witcheress to join his side, but he had been unsuccessful. This piqued Putnam's interest and the curiosity of the other expedition members due to the rarity of [female witchers](#). Putnam, in that moment, thought to himself that he knew few witcheresses of Redanian origin, or rather, he could say he knew only one, never suspecting who it might be, it would be a coincidence if it was her. Life had surprised him, both for better and for worse, so he was prepared for anything.

Falmak explained that he feared Valgvul would win with the witcheress on his side and carry out his plans. That's why he had immediately turned to Putnam upon seeing him, desperate to balance the scales. Although Falmak had allowed the presence of additional teams, who would effectively act as puppets for the orders of one of the two dukes (depending on which side they supported), he feared that neither his team nor his allied teams would win with Valgvul having the witcheress on his side.

It was then, shortly after, that the great revelation occurred, and Putnam would once again come face to face with his past (and at that time, unbeknownst to him, his future). It was a gradual realization, slowly emerging through his various senses. First, he detected a scent among the people in the tavern, a fragrance of aromatic plants attempting to mask the smell of blood but failing to do so, at least not for a witcher's sense of smell. He recognized it and had an inkling of who it could be but dismissed the thought. No, it was impossible for Jolanta to be there.

Next, he heard a Redanian accent, a high-pitched voice of either a woman or a man; he couldn't differentiate at that moment, subtly marked by the accent. Someone entered the tavern—could it be her? No, it couldn't be, so he dismissed the thought again, thinking he was simply becoming paranoid. But it was his sight that ultimately confirmed his suspicion. No, he wasn't mistaken. It was indeed Jolanta who was there. Five years had passed, and he never thought he would see her again after abandoning her with a letter all those years ago. In that moment, he felt a surge of shame as he remembered the more recent letters he had written and sent in less than ideal states, asking her for forgiveness. That explained why there had been no response. She was just as beautiful, although more tired, a clear sign that she had been through a lot. He wondered what had happened to her. He also fervently wished that their gazes wouldn't meet, but Jolanta had also recognized him the moment she entered, casting him a glance filled with all the terrible emotions that the witcher had evoked through his abandonment. It was a glance that Putnam would never forget, leaving him absorbed in his thoughts while the rest of the expedition members continued negotiating with Falmak about joining the team for the hunt.

In the end, they reached an agreement. They would join in exchange for Falmak signing an exclusive trade agreement, ensuring that only Kovir would receive Vinland's products. However, it was ultimately Putnam who had the final say. After all, he was the witcher. It wasn't until Fabio nudged him that he snapped out of his trance and agreed. Not because of what they had signed but because it provided him with another chance to speak with Jolanta and, hopefully, resolve things.

What Putnam didn't know at that moment was that Jolanta's reasons for being in Vinland were not related to the hunting tournament. Frankly speaking, she couldn't care less about it. Her true motive was to assassinate Valgvul for unjustly condemning her adoptive father, Pardus of Korath, to the gallows during his time in Vinland. Pardus had saved a couple of Skräling women from being violated, and Jolanta sought justice for his wrongful punishment. Patiently, she waited for

the opportune moment, using seduction as a strategy to lower Valgvul's guard, and ultimately, take his life.

The teams for the amikuk hunting competition consisted of a total of six teams, each led by one of the dukes or a prominent member of the local nobility. Putnam, Fabio, and the rest of the expedition, as mentioned earlier, joined Duke Falmak's team. This team also included several experienced hunters and skilled warriors, such as Falmak's own bastard daughter, the renowned Lady Knight [Sioni](#).

The other major team in the competition was led by Duke Vagvul, who had recently inherited the position from his father, Lestec. Vagvul's team was known for its aggressive hunting tactics, and he was determined to win the competition to solidify his rule over the duchy. The team comprised experienced warriors, many of whom had served in Vagvul's personal guard. Jolanta, being the only woman on the team, had been included due to her status as a witcheress and Vagvul's infatuation with her.

As a curious note, Putnam's immediate dislike of Vagvul was fueled not only by the duke's racism but also by his arrogance, pomposity, and overall foolishness. Vagvul's slimy behavior towards Jolanta only added fuel to Putnam's anger and frustration. His constant attempts to impress Jolanta with empty words and false charm further irritated Putnam. While he respected Jolanta's autonomy and understood that it was her choice whether to entertain Vagvul's advances or not, Putnam struggled to contain his urge to confront the arrogant duke.

Driven by a mixture of protectiveness, jealousy, and frustration, Putnam finally succumbed to his instincts and challenged Vagvul to an einvigi. The clash between the two men was fierce, with Putnam's skill and anger propelling him forward. In a swift and decisive moment, Putnam's fist connected with Vagvul's nose, breaking it and leaving the arrogant duke reeling in pain.

Throughout the ordeal, Fabio and Istredd attempted to calm Putnam, serving as his voice of reason and trying to dissuade him from engaging in a physical confrontation. They managed to calm him down on several occasions, but their efforts were ultimately futile in preventing Putnam from challenging Vagvul. His deep-rooted protectiveness over Jolanta and his disdain for Vagvul's slimy behavior overpowered any rational thoughts that urged him to restrain himself.

Jolanta's thoughts after that ranged from "just men being men" to the belief that the young duke deserved to have his nose broken. Ironically, thanks to Putnam, she saw an opportunity to get even more closer to the duke and exact her revenge for what he had done to Pardus.

The third team was a knightly order led by Limmdeyr Jarumson, a minor noble and the son of one of the jarls who ruled over one of the provinces within the duchy, specifically the northernmost one. He had recently returned from the region known as [Gotland](#), as called by the Vinlandi, where he had attempted to convert the tribals to the faith of Tyr Svetovit alongside his men, but their crusade had failed. It would be the first time the expedition heard of that region upon meeting them, and after that they planned to depart for Gotland once they finished their stay in the duchy. As expected, Limmdeyr supported Vagvul.

The fourth team was comprised of a group of merchants and mercenaries from the region known as [Kvenland](#) by the Vinlandi. These individuals had been friends with Falmak for several years, and their decision to join the tournament had a simple motivation: they wanted to abolish the excessive taxes imposed on them based solely on their ethnicity when conducting trade. If they emerged as the winners, their goal was to eliminate all the racist laws enforced by Vagvul, laws that Falmak had been unable to repeal due to the limitations of his governing power in the diarchy. It was through their encounter with the expedition that the group learned about the region, and they discussed the possibility of including a

visit to Kvenland in their plans, depending on the final route they chose after the conclusion of the tournament.

The fifth team was known as The Collectors of Spirits, or "Wakinyan Cikala" in the Skrælings' Common Language used in Vinland. It was comprised of skilled warriors from various Skræling clans. They were led by Brem, a mixed Skelliger / Skræling noble who served as both a rival to Vagvul and an ally of Falmak. Brem possessed a profound understanding and respect for the ancient traditions and beliefs of his people, vehemently opposing Vagvul's discriminatory policies targeting both mixed and pure Skræling populations. To Brem, the amikuk hunting competition provided an opportunity to showcase the strength and skills of his people while paying homage to the spirits of the hunted amikuks.

The team consisted of approximately 30 highly skilled warriors carefully selected for their exceptional hunting abilities and deep spiritual connection to the land. They were equipped with traditional weapons and were renowned for their stealthy and respectful hunting tactics. Initially hesitant to participate in the competition, Brem was eventually persuaded by his ally Falmak, who recognized the chance to enhance their prospects of victory and ultimately strip Vagvul of his power.

The last team consisted of a group of raiders from the region known as [Heluland](#) by the Vinlandi. Just like with the other teams, upon meeting them, the expedition learned about a new region and considered the possibility of passing through there once they had a more detailed route planned, rather than just an idea. These raiders had joined the tournament in support of Vagvul, as the young duke had promised them that if he or any of his allied teams emerged victorious, Heluland would be annexed to Vinland, granting them better living conditions and enabling them to retire from their raiding lifestyle.

And after joining Falmak's team, it would be two days later that the competition and their journey throughout Vinland would begin. The expedition was granted a day of rest as a courtesy for being the last to "arrive." Initially, the expedition believed that the journey for the tournament would be relative short, but it turned out to be longer than expected. The Duchy of Far North proved to be larger in size than Toussaint. It may not have been as beautiful as the duchy in the Nilfgaardian Empire, but it had its own charm. Personally, Putnam found it more appealing, despite the Kaedweni-like climate, albeit somewhat colder (and he preferred milder climates like Cidaris or Ebbing). Jolanta also appreciated the colder climate, as she was more accustomed to it than the heat. What bothered her the most was Vagvul, but she believed she would soon take care of that, or at least that's what she thought in that moment.

The initial days were challenging for Falmak's team, and they fell significantly behind the other teams. Jolanta, who had been in the duchy longer than Putnam, took the lead by successfully killing several amikuks, allowing Vagvul's team to maintain their first position, at least for the time being. The same applied to other teams, including Limmdeht's knightly order, whose experience in dealing with monsters during their failed crusade in Gotland gave them an advantage. During this period, Putnam was fortunate enough to eliminate one or two amikuks while sustaining minor injuries. However, he quickly learned from his mistakes, delving deep into the study of these monsters and refining his skills. By the end of the first week of the tournament, Falmak's team managed to secure the second position, trailing closely behind Vagvul's team. It's worth noting that Istredd's role as the team's healer and Eberhatt's more disciplined utilization of his lycanthropy also played a significant part in their progress.

The initial interactions during the tournament between Jolanta and Putnam were complicated and, above all, tense. Although they didn't want to engage with each other, they were forced to do so whenever the different teams crossed paths and compared the number of amikuks that they had hunted. They tried to maintain a

professional demeanor, but their shared past weighed heavily on them, making it nearly impossible. Jolanta, with her cutting wit, couldn't resist making sarcastic remarks whenever Putnam spoke, reminding him not only of their shared past but also referencing the witcher's emotionally turbulent life. Since Jolanta had crossed paths with Trill and even visited Marina's tavern in early 1282 when Putnam was still the talk of the regular patrons. Her encounter with Marina left her conflicted about what she thought of Putnam. Putnam, on the other hand, attempted to brush off these comments or justify himself but eventually gave up following Istredd's advice. In the words of the multifaceted mage, "With women like Jolanta or Yennefer, it's not worth arguing because you'll end up losing most of the time, believe me."

On Putnam's part, despite claiming to have moved on from Jolanta, it wasn't the case. And acts like breaking Vagvul's nose, said more than his words, no matter how much he justified himself by saying that he had done it because he was an asshole and needed a lesson, which was only a half-truth. Besides, Putnam was a terrible liar. And anyone could tell that. But Jolanta and Fabio more than anyone else.

It wouldn't be until the passing weeks, reaching the end of July 1286, that the tensions between the former couple started to ease, and gradually, the remaining embers of their relationship would reignite the fire.

But it wouldn't be until they arrived in the city of Leifsbuðir, famous for its hot springs, halfway through the tournament journey, to rest for a few days after traveling a long distance without seeing any civilization, that they would truly be together again after a quick fling in the hot springs.

Unfortunately, although time seemed to stand still when they were together, it was only a perception, and the tournament continued with each of them giving their best for their teams. The attitude of Putnam and Jolanta, since their quick fling at the city's hot springs, shifted from tense to sportsmanlike. This surprised everyone who had endured the tensions of the now-rekindled couple throughout the tournament, but no one said anything because deep down, they were grateful that the drama had subsided. The only one who suspected something was Fabio, who knew Putnam too well to easily sense that he and Jolanta were involved again. Putnam never denied it; he simply remained silent, as he enjoyed the secrecy of their renewed relationship. And he found it particularly amusing to come up with monster-related excuses to justify returning to the team with marks or disheveled clothing.

So, the weeks passed, and the tournament became a fiercely contested competition, with the teams including Putnam and Jolanta vying for the top spot most of the time. It was so fiercely contested that even at the end, when the team of the old duke was declared the winner, Vagvul exclaimed that Falmak's team had cheated and falsified several amikuk heads (a nonsense accusation), denying the results and almost triggering the civil war that the tournament was supposed to prevent. However, Jolanta finally managed to take her revenge by causing Vagvul to slip and fall off a cliff, resulting in his death. Nobody suspected foul play, and it was regarded as an accident. And as expected, after Falmak's victory, the expedition secured its long-awaited trade treaty for Kovir, and they began making preparations to venture further north, gathering information from the locals about the unknown territories ahead.

Returning to Jolanta created a dilemma for Putnam, who was forced to choose between her and the members of the expedition. In the end, he chose the expedition members because of not only his friendship with Fabio, but the perceived debt he owed Fabio for saving his life in 1280. Making his already rocky relationship with Jolanta even more complicated.

Heluland, The Land of Flat Stones (Late Summer - Early Autumn of 1286) 🏠

After getting everything ready and adding some locals who could be helpful to the expedition, Fabio and the rest of the expedition departed from Vinland in late summer, heading further north. Their objective was, in Fabio's words, "*To reach the northernmost end of the Continent.*" It could be said that they achieved this goal only partially. With the aid of these new additions, Fabio could start crafting a better map of the area (although with many errors that would need correction), and Putnam could prepare for the dangers that might lie ahead in terms of monsters. It was also thanks to these new members that they heard about another school of witchers, although they didn't know the exact animal motif, only that it was that of a bird.

Putnam pondered over what it could be. The School of the Hawk? The School of the Raven? He doubted it, but he didn't know many schools with bird motifs other than those and his own. Any other school was nothing more than myths from the 10th century, and who knew how much truth, error, or distortion lay in them. Eventually, they would come across one of these "myths," which turned out to be the [School of the Owl](#), or rather what was left of it, as they would unintentionally stumble upon them due to the conditions they encountered throughout their journey.

From Vinland, they traveled towards [Heluland](#) due to the presence of Skelliger population. They hoped these locals could help them navigate the region even better and guide them towards the farthest northern point possible. Thanks to the Vinlandi members added to the expedition, they had a general idea of what lay beyond the duchy, but it was still limited, and even the Vinlandi were unfamiliar with many things. Despite resolving many potential issues by including these locals, they still wanted to proceed with caution and not take unnecessary risks. The region was as dangerous as the Korath Desert, and the idea of dying in this cold, unforgiving part of the world was unpleasant for everyone.

Once in Heluland, the first things they encountered were the huge flat stones that gave the place its name and the harsh land that composed the area. It had its charm, but it couldn't hide the harshness of life there. When they found the first signs of civilization, it was in the form of a shepherd with his flock of sheep being attacked by a white dragon.

Upon seeing the shepherd under attack, Putnam didn't hesitate, even though it was practically suicide, and rushed to confront the monster. Eberhatt, who had learned to control his lycanthropy better, joined him, and what followed was a battle worthy of the legendary George of Kagen. It was a tough fight where Putnam put his mastery of Signs to the test. He came close to freezing to death due to the monster's icy breath and other deadly attacks. However, he applied the techniques that Adalwulf shared with him when they first met, about how to kill a wyvern, and what Keldar taught him in case he fought "a better-equipped" enemy. These techniques helped him survive the encounter with the white dragon, along with Eberhatt's assistance, who, in his lycanthropic form, distracted and weakened the dragon enough for Putnam to deliver the killing blow.

The battle left Putnam in need of medical assistance, but it could have been much worse without Eberhatt's help. They were fortunate that the Skelliger shepherd, whose life they saved, offered them aid by taking them to his settlement, sparing their own resources. During the battle, Istredd and Jabolet played a crucial role by creating a magical barrier to protect the shepherd, his flock of sheep, and the rest of the expedition from the dragon's freezing breath.

Heluland, as such, was not a unified state like Vinland. The harsh climatic conditions allowed for settlements led by various clans, but did not foster the cohesion needed to form a centralized country. Due to the scarcity of resources, these clans often engaged in constant wars, raiding each other, and other

territories when they travel across the [Great Lake](#). However, during that time, a common threat emerged, uniting them all and putting an end to their internal conflicts, at least temporarily. This threat turned out to be none other than a group of vampires from the Tdet tribe, who had found easy prey in the humans of Heluland.

More Blood For The Flat Stones

Once they reached the settlement known as Gutagard, where the shepherd they had saved lived (which was also a rare trading post in those harsh lands, engaging in occasional bartering with the tribes of Gotland), Putnam received medical attention for his injuries from the two doctors present in the expedition, Istredd and Eberhatt, as well as from some of the local shamans. Meanwhile, the rest of the expedition took the opportunity to rest and regain their strength, grateful for the hospitality shown to them by the Helulandi people, both Skelligers and non-Skelligers.

They also took the chance to inquire more about the area and how the locals managed to survive, gathering valuable information for their onward journey.

The witcher, therefore, would remain in bed for a few days until he finally recovered. He had almost suffered from hypothermia, along with some other injuries, and despite his superhuman physiology due to his condition, his body needed that recovery, regardless of the fact that the time required was shorter than that of an average human. All of this, oddly enough, would serve as a dark prelude to what was to come. Since during those days, the expedition learned about the ongoing events in the area and decided to offer their help. They did so not only as a gesture of goodwill to the locals for having assisted in Putnam's recovery but also in exchange for more information. The knowledge they had gathered during the witcher's recuperation was not sufficient. It had been an improvement compared to Vinland, but they needed more.

Almost immediately, they learned about what was happening, as it had been recent. It turned out to be a series of mysterious nocturnal attacks that were claiming a high number of victims in the different settlements of the region. This had instilled fear in everyone and put an end to their internal conflicts. Many believed it was a divine punishment from Vidarr for something they had done wrong, while others suspected there was something more sinister at play. Putnam, and consequently the entire expedition, sided with those who believed it was something more than a divine punishment.

Initially, the witcher was hesitant to help. He didn't want to waste potions, knowing the scarcity of resources such as plants and other materials required to prepare them in that part of the world. He wanted to continue traveling and nothing more. However, under the group's pressure, he eventually agreed. With Eberhatt by his side again (as the abilities of the mage and lycanthrope allowed them to save on potion materials if needed), Putnam began investigating what was happening in the "land of flat rocks." Soon, they found the answer: it was not a "vengeance of Vidarr" but rather vampires. However, he said nothing and continued the investigation. It was his duty to protect them, and there was no way he could back down now.

After finding out that it wasn't anything divine, having to travel through the different settlements of Heluland for at least a week to do so, Putnam, along with Eberhatt, returned to Gutagard to share the progress made with both the expedition and the locals. With luck, they could devise a plan, although, given that they were dealing with [Higher Vampires](#), as the lycanthrope and the witcher had discovered, the plan would have to be an exceptionally good one to be effective, considering that they were not dealing with just one, but several of these powerful creatures. This made the situation practically insurmountable and highly perilous.

While Putnam did have the assistance of mages, taking down a Higher Vampire was an extremely challenging task, and the chances of victory remained quite low. The odds improved, but not sufficiently enough.

Nevertheless, they had to help. Not only as a gesture of gratitude but also for the vital information they needed to survive until they reached the limits of the Far North and returned. The attacks recurred every week, specifically on weekends. Putnam speculated that they might be young Higher Vampires, suffering from the same "vampiric alcoholism" as Tuya. Alternatively, they simply "came out on weekends for fun" and claimed a large number of victims without considering the consequences for themselves or those left without a drop of blood in their bodies.

It was an incredibly stressful week, one of the most stressful the witcher with bicolored eyes had ever experienced. He was at a loss on what to do, and time was running out. In the end, he decided to resort to a crazy plan—to act as the bait himself. Literally, it was suicidal, and when he asked Istredd to cast a spell to amplify scents so that he could cut himself and lure the vampires to a secluded place where he would fight them, Istredd adamantly refused. But Eberhatt agreed to do it; he understood Putnam's position and his more than likely sacrifice. Due to the heated argument that followed, Istredd eventually tried to inform the rest of the expedition about Putnam's intentions before he carried out the reckless act, but it was too late.

Putnam knew it was the only method they could attempt with their limited resources and time. Sacrificing one life to save hundreds of innocent lives seemed like the only choice. At least it was a fitting way for a witcher to die. The regret he had back then was failing Jolanta once more, and the next news she would receive would likely be of his own death. Although the bait plan might not effectively stop the vampires, it could buy a brief period during which the human settlements could seek help from Vinland or elsewhere and perhaps neutralize the vampires for several decades with a greater force, similar to what had happened in Fox Hollow in Toussaint, although in that case, it was only against one very powerful vampire.

However, luck would be on Putnam's side that time, and while he wouldn't emerge victorious as a hero, he wouldn't die either. It would simply become one more of the many crazy things he had done in his life.

Taking advantage of the limited duration of the simple spell, he marched towards a secluded area, cut his hand with a dagger, and waited for the Higher Vampires to be lured by the false bait—an exaggerated cut enhanced with magic. For the first time in over a decade, Putnam felt a profound sense of peace, the kind that only knowing one's impending death can bring.

The vampires, eager to drink what they thought was a fresh, abundant source of blood, appeared almost immediately. There were four of them, and as Putnam had speculated, they were young. At first, they appeared as ordinary travelers, seemingly willing to "help" and inquiring about the whereabouts of more people (whom the vampires believed they had detected). However, as soon as they saw his medallion, their attitude quickly changed, and they attacked, entering a semi-transformed state for the fight. Putnam then used what would become a prototype of the [Hyper Black Blood Potion](#), which the witchers of the [School of the Bat](#) would use in the future. He had inadvertently added amikuk decoction to the formula, having made a mistake in the preparation due to the stress he had been under.

What followed was a fight that started out well but quickly turned against Putnam, as expected, and continued to worsen. Although he defended himself, his plan to poison the vampires with his blood after taking the potion had unforeseen consequences due to his mistake in the formula, and facing four vampires proved to be too much for him in his weakened state. But the worst was

yet to come. When the effect of paralysis caused by this unknown new prototype of potion that he had created wore off on the Higher Vampires, they were infuriated and began to "have fun" with the witcher, giving him the beating of his life. Putnam could almost see his life flashing before his eyes.

He was on the brink of passing to the Great Beyond when, at the last moment before his strength was completely depleted, someone from his past appeared to save him. It was none other than Tuya, a Higher Vampire who had helped in Haakland while Fabio and the others were with the Great Khan. Tuya had undergone a profound change since then and had taken on a new purpose. She had abandoned Haakland and her obligations there to dedicate herself to tracking down and stopping young vampires from causing massacres and teaching them that having power didn't give them the right to use it irresponsibly and believe themselves superior.

For weeks, Tuya had been following the trail of these four vampires when her path once again crossed with Putnam's. She held a fondness for the witcher, and seeing him in such a state enraged her and brought back memories of their time in Haakland, reminding her of the kindness he had shown her back then. Although she usually restrained and tried to redirect younger vampires, this time was different. Overwhelmed by her emotions, she killed the four vampires. After finishing them off, she found Putnam in a near-death state and carried him back to the settlement from where he had set out—Gutagard.

Meanwhile, in Gutagard, the expedition and the locals were anxiously waiting, praying that Putnam hadn't gone through with that madness and that he hadn't died. So when Tuya, who quickly came up with the excuse of being on a diplomatic mission once the expedition recognized her, appeared with the witcher in her arms, in that state, they felt a mixture of relief and concern. He was barely alive, so to speak. Fabio, in particular, was deeply affected, as seeing him like that reminded him of when he found Putnam in an equally terrible state six years ago.

After that, due to his condition, Putnam spent the entire autumn and the beginning of winter in bed, recovering and being cared for once again by Istredd and Eberhatt, with the addition of the local shamans, and occasionally Fabio and Tuya until she departed. Putnam tried to convince Tuya to stay, to join the expedition, and to rekindle what they once had together, but the Higher Vampire told him it couldn't be because of her new purpose. However, she expressed her happiness at seeing him alive. Due to these circumstances, although the expedition obtained the necessary information, their progress was also delayed, extending their journey for two long years until they finally reached the [Great Glacier](#).

Winter in Inis Kharab (Late December of 1286, Mid - February of 1287)

"I know it's winter, but we've got the skills and supplies, team. We can handle this."

—Fabio convincing the rest of the team before departure

After Putnam's recovery, despite it being early winter and ignoring the advice of the locals, they decided to set out. They believed that with the information they had obtained, their skills, equipment, and the supplies they had, it would be enough to endure until the new season arrived. Their plan was simple: to cross the Great Lake heading north. To do this, they had purchased a small ship and hired Helulandi sailors to assist them. They hoped to make up for lost time and, with luck, reach [Gotland](#) before spring. They would rest there until summer and then depart from there to the northernmost point they had heard of—the Great Glacier.

However, their plans would be thwarted by circumstances, eventually forcing

them to take a different route. One of the first unexpected encounters was with the witchers of the School of the Owl, whom they had previously considered mythical. They spent most of the rest of the winter together after their ships accidentally collided, causing the expedition's ship to sustain severe damage and begin sinking. The witchers of the School of the Owl then invited them on board to their fortress ship named Inis Kharab and set course for the expedition's intended destination, making amends for the inconvenience caused.

Putnam was delighted to meet the Owls, as it meant they were not just a myth, and stories about their participation in the First Witcher Tournament were likely true. Moreover, he had to admit that spending a winter in a witcher fortress pleased him. Despite missing Kaer Seren a lot, finding a "substitute" during this journey was somewhat comforting.

In addition, the Owls, despite their peculiar appearance and deviation from the standard witcher, turned out to be a valuable source of knowledge for the expedition. Conversely, having new people on board the fortress ship after the significant loss of members due to the anti-witcher policies of the duchy of Vespaden was beneficial for the Owls. It made the fortress ship feel less empty and provided them with companionship. Although they were cautious at first, they soon realized what good people the members of the expedition were, and they quickly became great friends. The Owls even affectionately nicknamed Putnam "Eagle Bearer" in recognition of his affiliation with the Griffin School.

To everything mentioned before, it must be added that once the expedition reached its destination and both groups bid farewell, the Owls welcomed the sailors that the expedition had originally hired into their ranks. The sailors willingly joined them, allowing the Owls to handle Inis Kharab more efficiently than with just the 12 members who remained in the school at that time.

And so, that winter, despite all that had happened in his life, was quite happy for Putnam. He made new friends and learned new things (many of which proved useful throughout the rest of his journey in the Far North) while also sharing his own knowledge with his hosts. Particularly beneficial for Putnam was learning more about the monsters of that region, the potions that could be made with the local plants and monsters, and combat techniques. It was undoubtedly a season of growth and learning for him and the Owls witchers.

Around mid-February of 1287, the paths of the expedition and the Owls Witchers would finally part ways, after thanking each other for everything. Once Inis Kharab crossed the Great Lake and left them at a destination that was not Gotland but was relatively close.

The Threat of the Ice Giants (Mid - Spring - End of the Summer of 1287)

After parting ways with the witchers of the School of the Owl, the expedition continued traveling, unintentionally heading westward and passing through [Markland](#) due to the challenging weather and terrain conditions. Just like at the beginning of their journey to the Far East, they got lost, and mistakenly thinking they were in Gotland. By the time they realized their mistake, they had to retrace their steps, but they got lost once again, eventually arriving unintentionally in the region of Kvenland, depleting their supplies in the process.

Although they managed to hunt a mammoth on the way and feed themselves, the animal was so large that they couldn't utilize all of it to make provisions. As a result, they simply endured until they reached the territory of the Kvens, where they stayed from mid-spring, when they had arrived, until around the end of summer.

This was due to two reasons: first, the present threat in the region, which the expedition agreed to handle in exchange for refuge and supplies, and secondly

because Putnam would once again find love in the form of a völvu named Ásgærdur. A völvu was a kind of equivalent to an oracle/druid/shaman/witch in the Northern Realms and Vinland, a combination of all these roles. Interestingly, this tradition was originally from the Skellige Islands but had been abandoned in favor of druids. However, in the territories where the Skelligers decided to settle during the early days of Nordling colonization on the Continent, the völvu tradition persisted, evolving to encompass the functions of the aforementioned roles in one.

And what was Ásgærdur like? She was a tall, red-haired woman with freckles and a strong character (which, of course, suited Putnam's usual taste). She also possessed some exotic features that indicated some Skraeling ancestry, likely from her grandparents or great-grandparents. Unlike in Vinland, in Kvenland, both the Skelligers and Skraelings had mixed to the point of giving rise to a new people, and culture born out of syncretism—the Kvens.

In fact, although the Kvens spoke the Nordling Common Tongue, it was a highly distorted dialect (though relatively understandable, around 50%) primarily used for trade with Vinland. The Kvens also had their own language, a creole tongue that emerged from the early Skellige jargon and Skraeling languages.

At first glance, völvus might appear similar to wiccans or witches (not to be confused with Female Witchers) in the Northern Realms or vedmas in [Kwanland](#). However, upon closer investigation, one would realize how different they were from these two types of women with magical abilities.

The expedition was already familiar with the term, both because Istredd knew of it from his knowledge of history (though not its evolution) and, more importantly, because they had encountered some völvus in Heluland. While they had less authority than in Kvenland, they still held significant power and were highly respected.

The threat was none other than giants. Ice giants (or more accurately, wrongly called ice giants due to their blue skin, as they were not trolls capable of fully adapting to their environment like ice trolls). Putnam had heard rumors and legends, especially about Geralt's feat in Undvik. Although he didn't rule out the possibility that giants might still exist outside the Northern Realms, he was surprised to learn that they were common in that part of the world. He had thought that human presence would have somehow eradicated them, especially knowing that the Owls witchers existed and were not just a myth. Despite being reluctant, as he tried to avoid killing sentient creatures whenever possible, he ultimately accepted the task. They needed the food to continue their journey and perhaps, the information the locals could provide to reach the Great Glacier.

All of this happened after a meeting with the kunin (a title roughly equivalent to king) of Kvenland, named Faravid. He promised them both supplies and shelter in exchange for dealing with the threat before winter arrived. None of his best warriors had succeeded in the task, he didn't want to risk his völvu, and the messengers sent to find the witchers of the School of the Owl had returned empty-handed. The twelve remaining members of that school refused to face the giants due to the risks involved since they were few and the only witcher school that still remained not extinct in the Far North at that time.

To carry out the task, Putnam teamed up with Istredd. The mage knew enough about ancient history and had the appropriate magical skills to be useful when dealing with the giants. He even had a theory (which he had written and published a thesis about) that it was possible to reason with the giants and wanted to put it to the test. However, humans, as always, preferred violence over dialogue. This theory had arisen from rumors that the witcher from the School of the Bear known as Junod of Belhaven was half giant and half dwarf.

Eventually, Putnam and Istredd put an end to the threat of the ice giants, albeit in a somewhat curious manner. And as already mentioned, the expedition would remain with the Kvens until the end of the summer. After that they would leave, and continue their journey even further north.

"Cold Roses" (Autumn - Winter of 1287)

The next stop of the expedition was the long-awaited (though not as eagerly anticipated as the Great Glacier) Gotland. The region was once an island in the distant past and was once dominated by the Gots tribe, from which it was said that all tribes who inhabited the area originated. Now, it was nothing more than a memory of a distant past, gradually becoming a legend.

In Gotland, they began to experience the first, stronger effects of the cold weather, as their autumn was even harsher than that of Kovir. The experience they had there would leave a significant mark on them, ensuring that at least on their part (and to a lesser extent, influencing the rest), that the future colonization of the Western Continent and the Silk Islands would not be as violent as the nordling colonization of the Continent had been so long ago. Serving as an example of how even the most violent societies can become more refined and better than their ancestors, without losing sight of the good and the bad of their past.

The situation in Gotland was divided into two parts. In the south, in the zone of influence of Vinland, things were calm since the failure of the knightly orders of the duchy in converting the tribal people there. In the north, in the zone of influence of Kaedwen and the territory of Saskia, the relatively recently proclaimed [Republic of Nemet](#), the situation was different.

During their journey through the southern region going north, they didn't encounter any tribes, but they did find traces of their active presence, as if they were hiding. Soon, they would understand why.

In the northernmost part of Gotland, under the influence of Nemet, it was relatively safe. Saskia had managed to integrate the tribes into the State she originally intended to create in the Northern Kingdoms but had to move further north to ensure its survival and growth. She respected their cultures and protected them when necessary, in exchange for a fair exploitation of their resources, mainly mines, by the dwarves who had joined her. These resources were sold to acquire the materials needed to build a sense of civilization in such a harsh environment. Progress was slow, but civilization was slowly emerging.

In contrast, the situation was very different in the area under the influence of Kaedwen. Kaedwen, realizing that a war with Redania wouldn't be beneficial, chose to expand to the east with the intention of becoming a power similar to its rival kingdom. To achieve this, they sought the help of knightly orders to pacify or exterminate the possible inhabitants of the region, as well as to deal with other potential threats along the way. For this task, they convinced the restored Order of the Flaming Rose to settle in Kaedwen by offering them better conditions than in Redania and using them as "mercenaries," thereby avoiding risking their own army until they had secured the new lands. Although there were already some Kaedweni trappers living in the Far North, they hadn't been able to establish a strong presence over the years.

Amidst all this, a young Anika Masir, 24 years old at the time, was serving as a sorceress advisor in the kingdom and opposed the expansion. She argued that Kaedwen had enough resources; they only needed better management to become a power on par with Redania. Additionally, she pointed out that the discovery of minerals in Kovir was simply a stroke of luck and that the land they were seeking to conquer was too harsh. However, her advice fell on deaf ears, mainly due to her youth and the prejudice that still lingered against sorceresses following the Witch Hunts a decade ago and the scandal of the Lodge in Loc

Muinne, which remained fresh in collective memory.

In Gotland, the expedition didn't encounter a "grand adventure" or face a "great danger." Instead, they found something more mundane but equally challenging compared to everything they had faced before – a people in need of help. However, they didn't need heroes to restore the status quo, as that was no longer possible. They needed people who would assist them in finding a way out and a better future, even if it meant leaving their homeland behind.

When they reached the north of Gotland (the region under Kaedwen's influence), they found not a massacre but extermination. It was the result of religious fanaticism that had grown to an extreme level due, among other factors, to nordling mentality and the harsh climate of the area. Several tribes were completely destroyed, now reduced to mere memories that would soon fade away. The impact on the expedition was so profound that at first, they even refused to believe it was a human act, since the cruelty displayed surpassed even what the average Nordling might have known, seen, or experienced. However, after Putnam and the mages investigated, they confirmed that it was indeed human and from Nordling origin when they found a emblem of the Order of the Flaming Rose among the corpses. It was then that they vowed, within their power, to prevent such things from happening again during their travels to explore the world – not by fighting them, but by preventing them from the start if they can.

For much of the journey in northern Gotland after discovering the extermination, they remained alert, for although they had found no signs of civilization other than the aforementioned deaths, they did not know how the people present there would react to their presence, whether they were the perpetrators of the deaths or possible survivors. And they did well, even if at first it seemed that they did not, since eventually, they would end up finding more people in that place. Not those sent by Kaedwen, at least not directly, but tribals. Tribals who had survived. The only ones, in fact, the tribe known as the Oyruhr. They had survived not only due to their fierceness and isolation (which was no longer useful to them) from other tribes but also because of the help of a renegade knight named Vallaryel. He had joined them at the last moment, realizing his mistakes and preventing them from being "purified by eternal fire" in a surprise nighttime attack that his by then former knightly order wanted to carry out to finish the work of cleansing those lands for Kaedweni settlement. After their attempts at pacification had failed, they chose to undertake a crusade to clean up against what they considered "barbarians."

The encounter with the Oyruhr, therefore, was destined to be violent, as although the Oyruhr had integrated Vallaryel into their tribe, it had been a lengthy process after they captured him, and he began his redemption. He helped them with what was mentioned before, learning their language, and eventually joining them, as already mentioned, at the last moment. He served not as a guide but as a companion who would help them, adding the tribe's knowledge of the region, to escape from Gotland using routes that the Order of the Flaming Rose would not use. By the time both groups of people met, the Oyruhr greeted anyone who was not one of their own with hostility, attacking with arrows and spears. The expedition came under attack, but fortunately, they managed to take cover and only received minor injuries. They avoided resorting to violence with a counterattack after Vallaryel spoke with them, and he decided to thoroughly interrogate the expedition to find out if they were hostile and, equally important, if they were part of the people sent by Kaedwen. After several hours of interrogation, Vallaryel confirmed that they were not a threat, giving the Oyruhr the green light that they were not people who wanted to harm them. He even suggested that having them with the tribe would be beneficial since they were "powerful" people.

The tribe debated it, and the expedition also did so after Vallaryel told them that if they wanted to join the Oyruhr to avoid any encounters with the Order of the

Flaming Rose and head to the land of Nemet, which the knight had heard about a bit further north from where they were. With both groups accepting the alliance, as it was mutually beneficial, the Oyruhr gained protection, and the expedition advanced further towards their objective. Additionally, they could collect all the knowledge the tribe had in written form for their survival during the rest of the journey and also for its preservation, and for future in-depth study.

It was then, once united with the Oyruhr, that Putnam was forced to confront his prejudices against knights when he got to know Vallaryel in depth. He considered that whether they belonged to orders or were wandering knights, they were all morally decadent, especially those followers of Lebioda, as they preached a lot, and when they wanted to lead by example, they ultimately ended up corrupting it. Putnam had noticed this in the past, particularly during the tournament in Cidaris. In fact, Charz was the only "knight" he truly respected back then. If he had agreed to investigate the murder during the tournament, it was for the money and to prevent the killer from remaining at large and killing more people, nothing more, once he had dealt with all the knights.

On Vallaryel's part, he held similar prejudices. He had no fondness for witchers, especially those of the Griffin School, whom he saw as "emotionless mutants who only killed for money" and "false knights who tarnished the name of authentic and pure knights."

Many of their initial tensions that could have led to a fight were avoided by [Mazheva](#), the eldest daughter of the tribe's leader, who always intervened when necessary, acting as an intermediary and the voice of reason during their journey to Saskia's "promised land." Her interventions became instrumental in turning the witcher and the knight into friends. Mazheva herself also became friends with Putnam, forming a curious trio - the witcher, the knight, and the tribal girl who, in Nordling terms, could be considered a "princess."

The journey went smoothly, with only a few incidents involving monsters and patrols that were relatively close and had to be eliminated. Due to this, Istredd proposed that they try to eliminate all of them and leave the land for the tribe. However, everyone, including the tribe with their limited knowledge of the world beyond Gotland, agreed that it was not feasible. The enemies were too numerous, well-equipped, and armed. It would take them a long time, and in the process, they could lose even more people. It was harsh and sad, but they had no other choice if they wanted to avoid risking the lives of those who remained. Perhaps if Saskia's state prospered more, things could change, and the Oyruhr could return to their land, even if it was more sparsely populated. However, that was yet to be seen, and it would take decades to know if it would come to pass or not. The Oyruhr even came to appreciate Putnam and the expedition quite a bit, giving each of them nicknames in their language. In the case of Putnam, he became known to the Oyruhr as "*Gollegryffe*," a name derived from the nickname that Jezkier gave him back in the day.

During that period, life offered Putnam another new romance, this time with Mazheva, and he wouldn't refuse, despite Vallaryel considering it immoral. As previously mentioned, Putnam had learned to value connections even if they were brief, so he let himself be carried away once more, hoping that this new romance would be a balm for some of the many wounds in his soul, much like Asg had been, or at least another pillar to aid in his complete reconstruction. In that sense, the Oyruhr "princess" did not disappoint, for there was much wisdom in her eyes, which both Nordlings and Nilfgaardians might consider "backward." Learning from her, he was reminded once again of the lesson to care for those within his circle, his family, and not to overextend himself. He shouldn't try to be the hero and fight for things beyond his control, something Putnam had forgotten since the deaths of Tubiel and Sigurd in his search for meaning and that spark that had given him so much humanity the connection he once had with the Lioness of Brenna.

As for Mazheva, both physically and emotionally, she was within the standard for Putnam's tastes; there isn't much more to say. Another redhead with light eyes (with a few strands of blond hair) and a strong character. Personality-wise, she vaguely reminded to Putnam of a mix between Tubiel and Jolanta.

Their romance would last until they reached the territories of Gotland influenced by Nemet. De jure, they were not a protectorate, but de facto, one could say they were. There, the Oyruhr and the expedition would part ways forever. The expedition would continue north, with their next planned stop being Nemet, while the tribe would stay in that place they hoped to call home, far away from the "civilized" selfishness that always wanted more and more. They aimed to prosper again without the fear of being exterminated for living differently.

The Frozen Utopia (Winter of 1287 - Spring of 1288)

"If all goes according to plan, you will unquestionably alter the course of history. There's no doubt that Nemet will become a topic of discussion in the North. Thank you, Saskia, for everything."

—Fabio Sachs to Saskia the day that the expedition departed from Nemet to resume their journey.

Their passage through Nemet was also calm and without notable incidents. What they encountered was an emerging nation and little more. Originally, they wanted to continue further north without stopping, but they were forced to spend the winter there due to the harshness of the climate, which was marked by its terrible blizzards.

However, they didn't remain idle despite the setback. Even though their journey would be prolonged, the extra time there would serve them well in establishing contacts and, hopefully, securing a new trade treaty for Kovir. They were willing to assist in any way possible, no matter how perilous, to support the still young republic and gain the trust of her leader.

True, it wasn't anything spectacular, and every settlement they passed through reminded them (at least those who had been on the expedition to the Far East to Valkare, but covered in snow) and the others of the poorer regions of Vinland. Nevertheless, they could still sense the effort Saskia had put into it, the residents' happiness despite the hardships, and the potential Nemet held to become a great nation and a true haven for non-humans, where each race could contribute its best qualities to create a bright future.

Saskia had even managed to communicate with the white dragons of the area, persuading several to leave their territory undisturbed, at least when it came to hunting, and even ensuring that these dragons would help them defend it if necessary.

The expedition was received quite well by the inhabitants of the republic that had been named in honor of the dwarf named Nemetvyn who had suggested they venture so far away. Despite everything, Nemet had become the dreamed-of state by Saskia, where all races could coexist in peace. It's true that they struggled to survive, but at least there it was only the climate they battled against, not potential invasions. The dragoness was more than convinced that this would be a state that would serve as a great example to others, helping improve coexistence in the future. In fact, they were welcomed by Saskia herself, who, upon learning of the visit by foreigners, sought them out. At first, she was concerned that they might be from the people sent by Kaedwen, but that concern vanished as soon as she met them. She even quickly accepted the trade treaty proposal that Fabio made on behalf of the Kingdom of Kovir.

The expedition was received quite well by the inhabitants of the republic that had been named in honor of the dwarf named Nemetvyn better known as Nemetius

who had suggested they venture so far away. Despite everything, Nemet had become the dreamed-of state by Saskia, where all races could coexist in peace. It's true that they struggled to survive, but at least there it was only the climate they battled against, not potential invasions. The dragoness was more than convinced that this would be a state that would serve as a great example to others, helping improve coexistence in the future. In fact, they were welcomed by Saskia herself, who, upon learning of the visit by foreigners, sought them out. At first, she was concerned that they might be from the people sent by Kaedwen, but that concern vanished as soon as she met them. She even quickly accepted the trade treaty proposal that Fabio made on behalf of the Kingdom of Kovir.

The only ones who didn't receive them well were Iorveth and his Scoia'tael elves, who had left with Saskia on the day she decided to establish her state in those inhospitable lands. However, Saskia eventually managed to convince the elves that the expedition members posed no threat. On the contrary, they were a blessing since they had a witcher among them. This would spare them from losing more people due to the monster problems in the area, which made life even more complicated than it already was. This convinced Iorveth to abandon his plans of embarking on an expedition with his men to search for the semi-mythical [Aen Ghele](#), who could assist them in surviving better in those challenging lands – a request that Iorveth had been making to Saskia for some time. It was here that the expedition first heard about this separate and mysterious tribe of elves as such.

Putnam, as had happened in Kvenland, took it upon himself to address the monster problems that in that case, the republic was currently grappling with. These monsters were impeding various advancements, particularly the establishment of safe transportation routes and more. In return for his efforts, Putnam during that winter, requested shelter, food, and provisions for the future. And occasionally, he also asked for some compensation in the form of gems, given the active mines, as a way to offset the challenges posed by winter work. Saskia readily agreed to this arrangement.

Meanwhile, the other members of the expedition attended to different tasks. Istredd and Eberhatt focused on assisting the residents with health-related concerns. Jabolet delved into investigating the monsters that Putnam had defeated and brought back, while Fabio spent considerable time with Saskia and the local inhabitants, gaining a deeper understanding of everything she had established in that region.

It would only be once the area was sufficiently secure for Nemet to continue prospering without as many setbacks, and once the trade agreement that Saskia had agreed to sign on behalf of Nemet with Kovir was ready and signed, that the expedition would depart from the young republic and continue its journey to the northernmost end of the Continent. Based on the information they had gathered, Fabio estimated that they had only about two or three months of travel remaining. Their departure would take place in the spring of 1288, when the perpetual snows of the republic's territory were thinner and the blizzards were less frequent. But not before expressing gratitude to Saskia and all the non-human inhabitants of the republic for their hospitality and camaraderie. They promised Saskia to carry her message of unity and harmony among races to the Northern Kingdoms, without revealing the location of Nemet (at least, until the republic had a better defensive capability and more trained people, just in case).

Reaching the End (Spring of 1288)

"It's remarkable to see people living here. Humanity's resilience never ceases to amaze me"

—Fabio to Istredd during their travel to the Tuathasgia Mountains

As the expedition left Nemet behind, they were met with a stark landscape of frigid cold, snow-covered terrain, a scattering of trees, and the occasional

presence of animals and monsters that inhabited the area for at least a month and a half. They managed to avoid most of the latter, as even for Putnam, with information provided by the Owls Witchers, they were unfamiliar threats. He preferred to flee rather than confront them, considering the risk of having the mages or himself injured in that remote part of the world would be highly dangerous for the rest of the group. Nonetheless, he made note of what he could observe and attempted to create sketches to better understand and study these monsters in the future if he encountered again for some reason.

This pattern continued until they encountered the [Tuathasgia Mountains](#), which they suspected (and their intuition proved right) would be their final obstacle on the journey. To their surprise, they stumbled upon civilization once again. It wasn't anything extraordinary, but people were living there, primarily in villages. This both surprised and pleased them, as it reflected the resilient spirit of humanity. Istredd speculated that the mountains might have acted as a natural barrier, creating a comparatively hospitable microclimate to the rest of the area, which could explain why they hadn't come across human presence until now.

The mountains were enormous, even larger than the Dragon Mountains, and undoubtedly crossing them would pose a challenge. So, they chose to communicate with the locals and restore their strength in some of the villages. This proved to be a daunting task as neither the locals nor the members of the expedition spoke each other's languages. However, they eventually managed to understand each other, regain their energy, engage in trade, and most importantly, secure a guide to assist them through the mountains. This guide, known as a "sherpa" in the terminology that would later be adopted by the Nordlings, was named Binsa. Thanks to Binsa's assistance, albeit with difficulty, they would ultimately achieve their goal of reaching the Great Glacier. But before that, due to the rugged terrain and climate, they were compelled to seek refuge and rest in the ruins of a fortress that Binsa pointed out to them during a few days. These ruins turned out to be an ancient Aen Ghele elven fortress named [Speur Mara](#), dating back to a time before the Aen Ghele tribalization during the adaptation to the White Frost.

In addition to this, they encountered at least the remnants of another witcher school that had occupied and repurposed the fortress. More specifically, a school consisting solely of female witchers, known as the School of the Siren (though technically their medallion depicted a nixa). Sadly, this school could not even last a generation, as Putnam, investigating the ruins, discovered the cause of their demise: a powerful avalanche. This sent shivers down his spine, reminiscent of the near-extinction of the Griffins. Moreover, he found materials that had survived well in the cold, half-destroyed texts related to mutations in female biology, a bestiary of the area, and more.

Throughout this leg of their journey, a lingering fear cast its shadow—the possibility of encountering a yeti. However, as fate would have it, a twist of irony awaited them. Ultimately, it was a yeti that would emerge as their unexpected savior, facilitating their triumphant culmination of the expedition and securing their swift and secure return to the Northern Kingdoms.

The Dead Lands (Summer of 1288)

"If the Aen Ghele can get us home, we should take the chance. It's safer than trying to retrace our steps"

—Fabio to group during this period after a brief talk

The Great Glacier represented both relief and challenge. Relief, because they had finally reached the northernmost part of the Continent. Now, they only had to reach the coast that Fabio speculated existed, and their journey would be at an end, with only the return remaining. Furthermore, being summer, the temperatures were around freezing, providing respite from the sub-zero temperatures they had endured in the latter part of their journey. However, it also

posed a challenge. Arriving in summer meant they had to endure 24 hours of perpetual sunlight—a situation they hadn't expected and which greatly affected them. The constant daylight disrupted their circadian rhythms significantly. Coupled with the fact that they were in a frozen desert stretching as far as the eye could see (even with Putnam's enhanced vision) and the rationing of their food, they succumbed sooner rather than later to the cold, hunger, mirages, and hallucinations.

This situation inevitably condemned them to perish there, if not for being saved once again at the last moment.

Their near-death experience unfolded gradually. As previously mentioned, it began with a lack of sleep. They attempted to remedy this by using spells and Signs to induce sleep, such as Somne, and by rotating shifts to count the hours and stand guard. However, these efforts proved futile as the monotony of the landscape and the 24 hours of full sunlight made it challenging to accurately gauge time, causing miscalculations or complete confusion. Subsequently, they began rationing their dwindling food supplies. The absence of proper sustenance left them increasingly fatigued, and each mirage they encountered spawned false optimism, further beguiling and disorienting them. The culmination of all this was hallucinations brought on by sleep deprivation. The Great Glacier transformed into an authentic white inferno, or as they eventually dubbed it, the "Dead Lands," a place from which they harbored doubts about escaping.

In terms that resonate with the religious convictions of the late 16th-century adherents of Saint Putnam, one could posit that the Great Glacier metamorphosed into a crucible where all, with Putnam at the forefront, would "purge their sins" and emerge as more refined individuals.

The first to fall were the mercenary, Kina, the dwarf Roth (which only deepened the life debt the dwarf owed Putnam), and the historian, Bosco. However, the expedition managed to continue, with Putnam and Eberhatt (in his lycanthropic form) carrying their unconscious bodies, which remained alive. Next to succumb was Tugdual, whom Eberhatt also carried, but with greater effort. Following him was Democritus, the mage, who met his end after stripping naked and running off, believing he had spotted hot springs. The remaining members tried to stop him, insisting that there were no hot springs and that it was a product of hallucinations or mirages, but they were unable to prevent him from doing so. They never saw him again.

To conclude with Jabolet, their progress was brought to a halt as they could no longer carry any more bodies, at least not without completely exhausting themselves and succumbing to the harsh conditions. They attempted to establish a makeshift camp, but it remained incomplete due to their state, and the rest of the group gradually followed suit, as if yielding to an inevitable fate. After Jabolet, it was Istredd's turn. He clung to the furs he had with all his strength, tears streaming down his face, while a single name escaped his lips before he closed his eyes—*Yennefer*. Following Istredd, Eberhatt, Fabio, and finally (excluding Putnam's dog, Frey), Putnam himself succumbed. Just like the others, various hallucinations, hunger, and cold took hold of him until he could bear it no longer.

Initially, auditory hallucinations besieged Putnam, voices from his past clamoring for attention—especially those of the departed. Tubiel's voice emerged prominently, urging him to surrender, promising a reunion that would bring him the sought-after peace, an end to his ceaseless quest. These were followed by gradually intensifying visual and auditory illusions, which gradually took on tactile and gustatory forms. D'yaebi "materialized," seemingly only to taunt him, questioning whether this death held more value than dying by her blade or in the company of her in the Tuyotuki Islands, bidding farewell with a tender kiss on his lips. Putnam wrestled with discerning reality from illusion, but ultimately reached the conclusion that D'yaebi, deceased, could not be present.

The subsequent phase of his brush with death introduced olfactory hallucinations. Suddenly, the aroma of hot food—specifically, the fare from Marina's tavern—filled his senses. Mustering great effort, he rose and embarked on an unceasing march across the Great Glacier, driven by the quest for sustenance. Yet, he eventually succumbed, realizing his mind had deceived him, after he fell to the ground. A respectable demise for a witcher, lacking the spectacle of being killed by vampires, but dignified, he thought as he comprehended his inability to stand, only being able to turn himself around. Ever faithful, Frey, the loyal tuyotukian dog, trailed him, vigilant against any reckless act that Putnam may commit, ready to share the ultimate fate of his master if need be. The subsequent phase of his brush with death introduced olfactory hallucinations. Suddenly, the aroma of hot food—specifically, the fare from Marina's tavern—filled his senses. Mustering great effort, he rose and embarked on an unceasing march across the Great Glacier, driven by the quest for sustenance. Yet, he eventually succumbed, realizing his mind had deceived him. A respectable demise for a witcher, lacking the spectacle of being killed by vampires, but dignified, he thought as he comprehended his inability to stand, only being able to turn himself around. Ever faithful, Frey, the loyal tuyotukian dog, trailed him, vigilant against any reckless act that Putnam may commit, ready to share the ultimate fate of his master if need be.

The final wave of hallucinations, akin to Death herself arriving in a most soothing guise, amalgamated all preceding experiences. Primarily olfactory, followed by visual, auditory, and even tactile sensations of Jolanta. She appeared radiant, moving Putnam to tears as he had never wept before, eclipsing even the sorrow of Tubiel's passing. His tears, borne from a blend of contrition for his errors and the dormant emotions he harbored for her, flowed freely. Jolanta—more accurately, her hallucinatory projection—enveloped him in an embrace, providing assurance that she comprehended his choices, and all would ultimately be well, that no wrongdoing occurred. While this deviated from Jolanta's customary demeanor, hinting at its illusory nature, Putnam brushed aside such distinctions. And thus, he readied himself for the inevitable end upon that frozen expanse. As Putnam at last reached the nadir of his endurance, he sealed his eyes, anticipating the embrace of death to finally sweep him away.

And then, the "miracle" occurred. However, to better grasp this, we must briefly revisit Novigrad. Well, rumors and whispers suggest that the hierarch of Novigrad, Cyrus Engelkind Hemmelfart, had struck a pact with the enigmatic Gaunter O'Dimm to secure the position he held. Jolanta who after the breakup returned to the Northern Kingdoms and dismantled a pedophile network with Cyrus at the top, by killing him, unknowingly did Gaunter a favor by expediting the moment when Cyrus's soul was due. Furthermore, Gaunter was in competition for this soul with another rival, another "merchant" with whom he had made a wager. In this instance, Gaunter emerged as the victor. So it appears that the (speculated) Cosmic Horror / Entity owed him a favor, and he remained a being of his word against all odds.

Naturally, as he approached Jolanta in a tavern and their conversation unfolded, she gradually dismissed him as a madman who believed he could grant wishes. Nonetheless, this did not dissuade Gaunter; since Jolanta played along, hoping he would fulfill the "wish" he owed her and then depart, leaving her in peace. It is said that Gaunter offered her three fundamental human wishes—fame, fortune, and power—along with a mysterious fourth one.

Jolanta rejected the first three options. "Fame?" She had plenty of reputation, albeit a mixed one, and if greater fame meant more travel and enduring bards' songs about her Putnam's love life, then that was a no-go. "Fortune?" After dismantling the pedophile network, she had not only been paid well but had also seized considerable assets. In fact, she could finally buy Crippled Kate's brothel next to her home in the Glory District, expanding her residence and sparing herself from the presence of both prostitutes and their clients. "Power?" She had

zero interest in delving into politics beyond what the Redanian Secret Service might offer her as a job. So, she opted for the fourth, without considering the consequences it would entail (fortunately, these turned out positive). The fourth wish was for "something she secretly desired but didn't know."

Following this, Gaunter is said to have smiled, clapping his hands three times, and what followed was the sound of a tremendous blizzard in summer from outside, prompting everyone to glance out the window to see what was happening, only to realize that no adverse weather phenomenon had occurred. By the time Jolanta went to ask Gaunter what had transpired, after glancing suspiciously at her drink, wondering if she had been drugged, he had simply vanished without a trace. After the encounter, Jolanta returned home to rest and just as she was climbing the stairs, she felt a sudden wave of relief, as if she knew that something was now right, unlike before. As she was ascending the stairs, she felt a sudden wave of relief, as if she knew that something was now right, unlike before. It was a peculiar sensation, but she didn't dwell on it.

Turning our focus back to the Far North, it was precisely after Jolanta experienced this feeling that Putnam, Frey, and the expedition members who were at the half-finished camp suddenly vanished and were transported to another part of the Great Glacier, close to a cave where a yeti resided. The yeti had emerged from its abode to fish and stumbled upon them, ultimately saving their lives at the last possible moment. Just a bit longer, and they all would have perished.

And though unknown to both at that moment and afterward, it was curious how their destinies intersected, even though separated by such a vast distance, as if a distant echo were beckoning them. For Jolanta's subconscious wish "that Putnam would be well despite everything" would prove pivotal in his salvation and that of the other members of the expedition. Not to mention, of course, the yeti.

The duration they spent unconscious under the vigilant care of the yeti, who turned out to be quite the opposite of the mythological clichés attributed by nordlings, was indeterminate. The only clichés that held true were its white fur, ogroid features, its dwelling in a "cave," and its height, although it wasn't as tall, measuring roughly the size of the deceased Zivor. All they knew was that it was still summer when they awoke, or at least summer as understood in the Great Glacier, which meant six months of constant sunlight.

The first to wake up was Istredd, who was surprised to learn not only that they had survived, but also how kind and clever their savior was and how beautiful his cave house was. As is obvious, the yeti did not speak Common but Elder Speech, more specifically the Aen Ghele dialect, which fortunately did not vary much from standard Elder Speech. So, sooner rather than later, Istredd and the yeti got to talking, bringing the yeti, who by the way, was named Sharrunni, up to speed with the mage on what had happened and becoming good friends. They embarked on philosophical discussions, traversing history and a variety of other topics as the others were recovering. Istredd took notes of everything he could, as he felt as ignorant with the yeti (all in a good way) as when he was under Roedskilde's tutelage in his younger years.

Sharrunni even fixed the parestisomach that Istredd had taken on the expedition and with which he had been taking pictures from time to time, as no painting would do justice to what they had experienced so far. The parestisomach had broken due to the cold.

The second to awaken was Eberhatt, followed by Roth, who, although he didn't dislike Sharrunni, found him a bit dull (he actually felt envious of his cave house, but that's a story for another time). The mercenary and the historian were the next to wake up, followed by Tugdual, and finally Putnam, who, due to the folly of leaving the camp half-done, had suffered more. Apart from the sleep problems

he was already experiencing (which had improved but were still present), it seemed as if he needed more rest. Sharrunni assured them that he was fine and that he would wake up sooner rather than later, he was sure. And while this reassured the rest of the expedition, they couldn't help but worry about his condition, especially Frey, Fabio, Istredd, and Kina on behalf of Brynn, seeing that everyone was awake except him.

Their concern was somewhat alleviated only when Putnam began to move and talk in his sleep, which was an indication that he would wake up a few days later. And thanks to Frey, it must be said, who, seeing the improvement, was encouraged to try waking his master with licks after several unsuccessful attempts.

Putnam's initial reaction upon waking and seeing the yeti was to attempt to defend himself, as he believed it might attack him. However, upon realizing he was naked, he became surprised and attempted to locate his belongings with his gaze. Istredd took advantage of the moment to intervene and reassure him that everyone was fine and that, in fact, the yeti had been their savior, and there was no need to defend himself or cause harm. Putnam, trusting the mage's word and confirming the well-being of everyone as he saw them, began to relax and catch up while eating and regaining strength, along with the rest of the expedition and their host. As days went by in Sharrunni's home, Putnam's strength gradually returned. The camaraderie between the expedition members and the yeti deepened, their conversations a multitude of subjects. Sharrunni, whose initial appearance had been perceived with apprehension, was now regarded as a friend and a font of wisdom.

Through Istredd's skillful translation, the exchange of ideas and gratitude flowed. Putnam thanked Sharrunni for his life-saving intervention, to which the yeti humbly responded that it was simply the right thing to do. Life on the Great Glacier was lonely, as there weren't many of them left, not because humans or other races had nearly driven them to extinction, but because they themselves, the yetis, had done so during the peak of their civilization. Sharrunni's gratitude for the companionship and the opportunity to impart his wisdom on the humans was heartfelt, urging them to avoid repeating the mistakes of his people and to share these teachings with their fellow humans to prevent the collapse of another civilization.

In the midst of these discussions, time passed until Putnam had fully regained his health. Yet, an inevitable question loomed, one that had been sidestepped for fear of offending their gracious host: How could they find their way back home? The mages couldn't open portals, as, aside from climatic factors, the area was too far from the Northern Realms, which would lead to portal malfunctions. Although portals were undeniably useful, they only covered a specific range. Therefore, attempting to open one in the Great Glacier could result in disaster, with the threat of potentially being even more catastrophic than the typical outcome of losing a limb due to portal instability.

To everyone's surprise, the yeti responded without being offended that if they wanted to return to the Northern Realms, he could take them with the Aen Ghele. They weren't exactly the friendliest "neighbors" in the world, but if anyone had the ability to get them home without having to make the perilous journey back, it was them.

Among the Glacier Folk

Sharrunni had told them about going to the [Aen Ghele](#) for a simple reason. Despite tribalizing to survive the White Frost, they possessed as much knowledge as their cousins from other elven groups, such as the Aen Seidhe and the [Aen Elle](#), to name a couple of examples. Since tribalization didn't imply becoming savage; it simply meant choosing a simpler way of life for various reasons and becoming more integrated with nature. In the case of the Aen Ghele, it was to

survive an impending catastrophe, because they didn't believe that Zirael had eradicated the White Frost; they thought she had merely postponed its arrival in their world and sooner or later, this phenomenon would ravage their world. From a certain perspective, they were correct, as there were still threats that could freeze the world and rob it of all life. However, that's a discussion for another time. Therefore, Sharrunni was confident that they would have at least an Aen Saevherne among them, who, with their magical expertise, could address the issue of distance and return them home if they managed to convince them. This would be the most challenging part of the whole affair.

So, once Sharrunni did them the additional favor of retrieving their belongings from the half-finished camp, and all members of the expedition felt strong enough to journey to the Aen Ghele, they set off through a series of interconnected caves from the yeti's home in search of this isolationist group of elves. The journey took them several days, precisely four, with stops only for meals and proper rest, avoiding the sleep troubles they had experienced upon arrival at the Great Glacier. To solve this, they used a device provided by Sharrunni that accurately calculated the hours of the day (and consequently, the hours of sleep).

After four days with their four nights (though the latter were only calculated), they finally found traces of the Aen Ghele, and the expedition and the yeti parted ways. While the expedition tried to persuade Sharrunni to help them interact with the Aen Ghele, he told them he couldn't, and his assistance ended there. He didn't have a bad relationship with the Aen Ghele, but it wasn't perfect. It was more of a tense respect that could turn violent at any moment if not for the occasional trade between the elves and him, exchanging things of mutual interest (hence Sharrunni's knowledge of Elder Speech). However, he was sure they would manage well on their own and could return home without a problem. While the yeti wasn't entirely wrong in this belief, it turned out to be a half-truth rather than the whole truth.

The first contact with the Aen Ghele, while not as violent as with the people of Mazheva, was still complicated. It began when they attempted to speak with the first Aen Ghele they encountered, who fled with their people upon seeing that they were human Nordlings. Through the Aen Saevherne they possessed, the Aen Ghele were aware of the dire situation their Aen Seidhe cousins were facing in the Northern Realms. This Aen Ghele then returned with a small group, comprised of several druids, who attacked the expedition. Despite the mages in the group defending the other expedition members well, they were defeated with overwhelming ease, ending up captured and rendered unconscious in the process. They were subsequently brought before the Aen Ghele king to explain their presence and intentions.

By the time they regained consciousness, they were truly within Aen Ghele territory, not just on its outskirts, and they were imprisoned. Confined within what appeared to be bars of ice or a similar substance. Putnam attempted to use Igni to melt the bars but found no success. However, their confinement didn't last long as Aen Ghele soldiers soon arrived to shackle them and lead them to the king. In doing so, they gained a better view of how these elves lived and what their kingdom was like.

Similar to Sharrunni's cave home, the underground kingdom of the Aen Ghele was elegant, but even more refined. This isn't to say that Sharrunni's dwelling was ugly in comparison, not at all, but there was a noticeable difference between the more squared architecture of the yeti, reminiscent of dwarves, and that of the Aen Ghele. The latter possessed a perfect blend of beauty, harmony, and integration with the environment, a hallmark of elven design. In their case, this integration was even more pronounced due to their living in the singular environment that was the Great Glacier, unlike their Aen Seidhe or Aen Nílfé cousins who lived in more habitable zones.

They weren't treated as harshly as they had anticipated, but rather in a tough manner. It was evident that they were not trusted in the slightest. The Aen Ghele had tolerated the presence of a certain group, on one occasion, mainly because a golden dragoness was among them. Istredd spoke on behalf of the rest of the expedition most of the time due to the inability of the others to speak Elder Speech, but the situation didn't improve much. It wasn't until the Aen Ghele princess, Veejovva, entered the scene and recognized Putnam's medallion that things began to change. She had lived with the Ryvlyn of Sanzode group during their time among the Aen Ghele, a group respected both by the golden dragoness they had within the group, and by the elven ally they had made. Veejova had been impressed by the kindness and respect they had shown, and she wanted to believe that another member of the Griffin Guild, along with their friends and allies, would be just as honorable as Ryvlyn and his group.

Fortunately for everyone, Veejovva's belief proved true. However, her father and other members of the Royal Court remained skeptical. They still regarded the princess's father as having been overly permissive with Ryvlyn and her friends in the past. This viewpoint continued to cause disputes among the Aen Ghele nobility and gradually undermined the king's authority among the various elven clans that comprised their society.

While progress had been made, it remained limited, leaving the expedition members at a crossroads concerning their fate and still struggling to find a path back home. The Aen Ghele were burdened with a fear that exposing their existence could attract the Nordling expansionism, resulting in their annihilation. For this apprehension, the group found themselves incarcerated once more, spending several days confined until they were once again summoned before the king. After extensive deliberation, a decision was reached, one heavily influenced by the king's daughter, it should be noted. She held a steadfast belief in Putnam's integrity, akin to Ryvlyn's, and also harbored a crush on the witcher.

The verdict unfolded thus: They were granted the opportunity to return to the Northern Realms under three stringent conditions. First and foremost, they were prohibited from revealing the Aen Ghele's existence; any violation would trigger a pursuit by the elven sages, leading to the death of all expedition members (and the sages could ascertain if they had revealed their existence to the nordlings or not easily). Second, their departure was contingent on their assistance in resolving the various problems plaguing the Aen Ghele, a task designed to cultivate trust between the two groups. Third, the witcher was tasked with serving as the princess's bodyguard, ensuring her secure navigation through the subterranean kingdom.

The acceptance of these terms was swift, borne out of a genuine desire to return to the Northern Kingdoms. Among the expedition members, Putnam's decision was the most deliberative, yet he eventually agreed to the role of the princess's guardian, influenced by peer pressure, despite his reservations (for he would have preferred to help with the Aen Ghele problems).

The rest of the expedition members were assigned unpleasant or dangerous tasks by the Aen Ghele. These tasks included dealing with ice trolls, clearing rubble, cleaning up the waste of snow leopards, and similar duties. The king took advantage of this to keep his allies with magical abilities close, as his paranoia about being overthrown (as had happened with Auberon in Tir ná Lia) grew with each passing day. After Ryvlyn's visit in 1270 and the defeat of the Wild Hunt two years later, Aen Ghele society had gradually become more polarized, reaching a complicated point. There was a growing fear that his reign would soon come to an end, and that a puppet ruler might replace him, or a new dynasty with a more radical stance towards other races could emerge through a coup or regicide. This new ruler might attempt to subjugate, destroy, or enslave others in revenge for Eredin and his men's defeat, supposedly in defense of their Aen Seidhe cousins.

He could despise humans, but on the other hand, he didn't want bloodshed for both sides.

For this reason, although he had originally considered turning to the witcher to solve the minor problems they had, he chose not to. Instead, he assigned him as the protector of his daughter. While the young woman was capable of defending herself, having a witcher by her side would be beneficial in case things turned sour. After all, if a witcher had defeated Imlerith and subsequently Eredin, it was clear that they were a suitable type of "warrior" to accompany her on the mission she had.

Veejovva's strength lay not so much in physical prowess, but in diplomacy. She intended to assess the situation while traveling throughout the kingdom and negotiate new agreements with the different clans that would prevent the potential overthrow of her father, a concern of which she was aware, as they had a very close relationship. This made him trust Veejovva and her intuition when she told him that the new Griffin seemed to be as honorable as the one who had visited them before.

Communication with Putnam fortunately wasn't an issue. Veejovva spoke Common, albeit somewhat roughly, learned from her time with Ryvlyn, who had taught her the language. Additionally, the fact that Putnam and Ryvlyn knew each other made their relationship shift from being overly formal to becoming a friendship fairly quickly. This was beneficial for both of them, as they would spend many hours together.

Physically, the princess was insanely beautiful, although obviously not reaching the levels of Enid and Glenna, better known as Francesca Findabair in the Northern Kingdoms. Taller than Putnam, who stood at around 6'3.6", she measured about 6'10.7" in height (something that Putnam found amusing, since a bodyguard is typically at least the height of their charge, but he didn't comment on it), with snow-white hair (including her eyebrows) like snow, purple eyes, and pale, almost bluish skin—something common among Aen Ghele royalty. This caught Putnam's attention and would influence his decision to have a relationship with Aine two years later, rather than just a one-night stand. Despite its apparent insignificance, this would be another cornerstone for what would come after and the future foundation of the School of the Crane.

It would be during this time that Veejovva dealt with all of that, their romance would blossom due to the significant time they spent together and the elf's predisposition. Fortunately, Putnam didn't have to do much in the political intricacies, mostly just appearing tough and staring intently to intimidate when necessary, as the attacks were more verbal than physical. He acted more as a caretaker for the princess's snow leopard, which also accompanied them, a food and drink taster to check for poison, and a companion who offered advice from an entirely external perspective, rather than a traditional protector or bodyguard.

However, this is not to suggest that there weren't more "physical" dangers. During their journey through Aen Ghele territory, Putnam found himself in a few confrontations, primarily against ice trolls and what he humorously dubbed "albino shaelmaars." Yet, these instances could be counted on one hand.

Being the greatest challenge that Veejovva faced in her political adventure dealing with the Aen Elle refugees in the territory. These were warriors from the Wild Hunt who had survived the events in Undvik and had marched into their territory in search of a new home due to their inability to return to their native world. The problem was that, after so many years, they hadn't integrated and, along with the more bellicose factions of Aen Ghele society, they were radicalizing many and pushing the society towards internal conflict if their policy of extermination and enslavement against other races wasn't accepted.

Expel them? No, they couldn't, at least not in a hasty manner. It wouldn't be dignified, and it would only validate their wrong perception that the king was 'weak,' that he was too 'humanized' (and that wasn't positive in that context), making the situation worse. They had to convince them, change their mindset somehow, and if there was no other choice, then yes, expel them. It was a complicated situation, and Putnam didn't know how to advise her. So, he chose to remain silent for a while, until he finally realized something and mentioned it to the elf.

From his perspective, the reason for radicalization was simple. They had lost their purpose, which had led them to become entrenched in their beliefs and become extremists. If it wasn't too late, they could win back the Aen Ghele who had been swayed by them. But for that to happen, they would have to show that the Aen Elle present there were changing radically. To achieve this, he believed that they should be given a new purpose within the society. Initially yielding a bit, then gradually transforming them without them realizing it, and letting them see for themselves the mistakes they were falling into. To better explain his idea, Putnam used an example: his intense debates with Jolanta about morality due to their different upbringings, which always ended without either of them yielding, only reinforcing their existing beliefs. Besides that, he missed her a lot sometimes.

Lecturing them wouldn't do any good (as he had done so many times with the feline), it would only worsen the problem already at hand and force a choice between the two most extreme options. However, understanding them, without yielding excessively, so that the other party also had to compromise, might lead to a middle ground and potentially change things. Something that, sadly, was impossible in the Northern Realms between the Scoia'tael and humans.

This did not mean to be neutral, and to consider, that evil, whether lesser or greater, was evil. On the contrary, it was about opening a new path that would minimize the effects of both lesser and greater evils. The goal was to make the impact of both almost negligible. In this case, the lesser evil, which would involve expelling the Aen Elle and their radical Aen Ghele allies, would likely only lead to further radicalization, potentially forming bands that would terrorize the different populations of the Far North. The greater evil, fully conceding to their demands, would only result in unnecessary death and destruction, putting them on par with the Nordling humans.

Establishing this approach would require a delicate balance between firmness and understanding. Veejovva knew that she couldn't allow the radicalization to continue, but she also understood that she couldn't dismiss the Aen Elle refugees without exhausting all options. She decided to take Putnam's suggestion seriously and began working on a plan to redefine the role of the Aen Elle refugees and their radical Aen Ghele allies in society. She aimed to understand their perspective, pinpoint where their vision fell short, and then bring about change in a way that wasn't abrupt, even allowing for a degree of self-critique among the other part.

Realizing that all of this stemmed from fear, particularly the fear of losing what had made them "great," Veejovva considered the possibility of giving the warriors of the Wild Hunt and their Aen Ghele allies the purpose of defending their people, which could potentially bring about a positive transformation. She even contemplated the idea of "deceiving" them, leading them to come into contact with the powerful silver dragons. Perhaps these dragons, with their wisdom, could help them realize the error of their ways after failed hunting expeditions against them, especially if circumstances didn't improve. And indeed, this turned out to be the case (thankfully without having to actually involve the silver dragons), as they were truly lost.

By assigning them the purpose of defending their people from threats even more dire than humans, the Aen Elle gradually integrated into their new society, while

the Aen Ghele radicals found themselves being welcomed back into their society without considering themselves a separate group. Through this process, they relinquished their radical ideology of expansion and dominance, eventually becoming a part of the larger community once again. They came to understand how their new/old society had entrusted them with a crucial task, allowing them to see the value of integration. This caused, for example, the Aen Ghele radicals to perceive the more isolationist Aen Ghele as equals rather than cowards. On the part of the warriors of the Wild Hunt, this transformation led them to shift their role from oppressors to defenders of their kind. This change aligned better with their original beliefs but without the extreme aspects, and it ultimately allowed them to redeem themselves by defending their newfound people without seeking to exterminate or subjugate any real or potential threats.

This, along with the completed tasks and interactions of the other expedition members with the Aen Ghele, earned them enough trust, with even the Aen Ghele giving nicknames to all members of the expedition, with Putnam being nicknamed An Greamdoir Gynvael (*Translated: The Ice Breaker*), for the work he had done alongside the princess in "breaking the ice" in a divided society that could now come together once again, to finally be taken before one of the Elven Sages and returned home through a portal. This also meant that Putnam had to part ways with Veejovva, but as with other times, while painful, it wasn't as heart-wrenching.

After the expedition to the Far North / Settlement period (1288-1302) ✧

After their return to the Northern Kingdoms, the group went their separate ways, though they remained in touch through letters, especially Fabio, Istredd, Eberhatt, and Putnam, who were very close to each other. Each of them resumed their respective occupations: Eberhatt returned to the clinic, Putnam continued his work as a witcher, Istredd delved into archaeological excavations and pursued academic endeavors, while Fabio, after reporting to the Koviri Crown and allocating the expedition's earnings to each member, relished life with his family.

Despite his commitment to family life, Fabio didn't forsake his passion for exploration and cartography. He drew up a more or less accurate map of what lay beyond the Nordling and Nilfgaardian territories, although he temporarily set aside exploration until his children grew older. During this period, Fabio and his wife Erin welcomed their last two children, Heda and Canata Sachs. Due to Erin's complaints about Fabio being an absentee father because of his expeditions, he decided to settle down for a while and raise his offspring. However, he remained obsessed with learning more about the world, even studying the climate to determine if there were more land masses beyond The Continent, a theory that would eventually prove true.

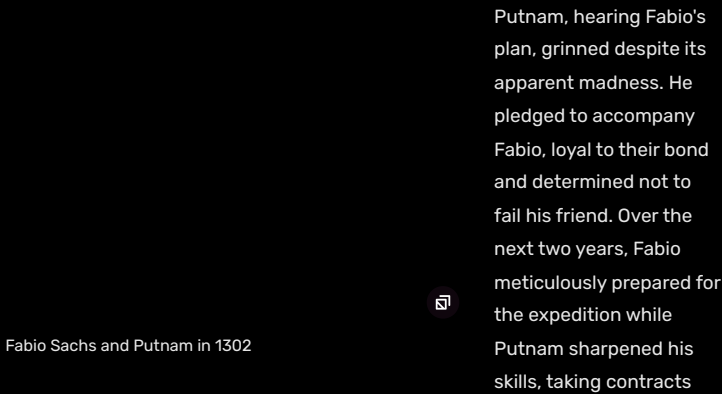
Putnam and Fabio deepened their bond a lot during this period. As Putnam by the year 1290, married an elf named Aine and settled in the city of Kerack. Fabio, Erin, and their children often visited "Uncle Putnam" and "Aunt Aine," further strengthening their friendship and in some way "familial ties".

Planning the final expedition (1300) ✧

By the year 1300, Fabio Sachs had achieved a near-legendary status thanks to his two expeditions and scholarly contributions. Despite his accolades, he found himself somewhat melancholic after settling down, due to his children having left home, and the passing of his wife Erin. Yet, his longing for adventure was rekindled by his theories about uncharted lands beyond the Great Sea. At 48, he hesitated due to his age, until Putnam visited Gors Velen seeking solace after a bitter divorce from his wife Aine.

Their friendship by that time, allowed for candid discussions about Putnam's romantic tribulations. However, their talks eventually extended beyond personal

matters, with Fabio revealing his audacious plan for a new expedition—an endeavor that would become one of his most daring yet. Despite feeling aged, Fabio was driven to prove his theories and embrace life's possibilities, no longer content with academic pursuits alone.



Fabio Sachs and Putnam in 1302

Putnam, hearing Fabio's plan, grinned despite its apparent madness. He pledged to accompany Fabio, loyal to their bond and determined not to fail his friend. Over the next two years, Fabio meticulously prepared for the expedition while Putnam sharpened his skills, taking contracts

against aquatic monsters. Their reunion in March 1302 marked the beginning of their momentous journey.

Fabio's wealth from previous expeditions and investments funded their venture, unconcerned with skepticism or risk. His children, financially secure and successful in their own rights, supported his decision. With Fabio's daughters' thriving businesses and Putnam Sachs' reputation as a painter, money was not a concern.

The stage was set on March 11, 1302, as Fabio and Putnam embarked on one of the two white ships that make the expedition, ready to face the mysteries beyond the Great Sea.

Last voyage and death (March 11, 1302 - September 5, 1306)

At last, the long-awaited departure day arrived. The port was bustling with activity as Putnam and Fabio oversaw the final preparations for the expedition. The ships, two of white color to be precise, based on designs that combined Redanian galleys with influences from Cidarian galleys, had been commissioned by Fabio. They were impressive in both size and design, loaded to the brim with supplies, crew (among them some members of other expeditions like Istredd and Eberhatt), and tools for the journey. While most people, even within the expedition, considered this adventure to be madness, the payment was too good, and the spirit of determination and excitement in the air was palpable despite it all.

The morning was crisp and clear as the two friends stood on the deck of one of the ships, gazing at the horizon. The sails fluttered in the sea breeze as they bid farewell to the coastline they had known all their lives. As the ship sailed further away from the mainland, Putnam and Fabio exchanged a meaningful look, reminiscing about all the times they had overcome challenges together.

The days at sea turned into weeks and then months. The crew sailed through storms and calm waters, keeping hope alive as they pursued Fabio's bold vision. Putnam, on his part, was tireless in his preparations and in protecting the crew from various dangers, showcasing his skills acquired as a witcher adapted to the open sea. This marked the emergence of the more "Crane-like" Putnam, leaving behind the "Proto-Crane" era of Putnam before the formation of the witcher school.

In fact, due to one of these storms, they had to make a stop at the island of [Basilia](#), the westernmost civilized place (specifically, west of the Skellige) known to both Nordlings and Nilfgaardians (more Nilfgaardians than Nordlings, it must

be said). While it provided them with a rest and the opportunity to gather strength for the rest of the journey, it also caused further delays because the ships needed repairs. In Putnam's case, it turned out to be positive as it allowed him to renew equipment that had been damaged or worn out from defending against monsters, so he didn't complain.

During this time, the witcher defended the crew from all sorts of aquatic and aerial monsters, from some he already knew, such as nixas, drowners, and sea serpents, to others he hadn't encountered before but managed to handle and then study, such as ceireans, zatarans, ranamaris, and afancs. These monsters would later become part of the future bestiary of the Cranes and the collective work colloquially known as the [Tome of Monsters](#). On more than one occasion, the expedition came close to losing Putnam, but his skill as a witcher, along with the proto-techniques and equipment he had developed and brought with him, that would become part of the school he would establish, even though it was still 79 years away, served him well.

During the nights, it was customary for Putnam and Fabio to sit on the deck, gazing at the stars and sharing stories. They reminisced about moments of laughter, challenges overcome, and how they had come to this point. Despite the uncertainty the vast ocean presented, their friendship and Fabio's determination kept their spirits united, and with faith that they would achieve their goal. After all, they had faced worse challenges before.

Continuing with the journey, the two ships pressed onward, navigating dangers and challenges in the uncharted waters. Supplies were carefully managed, and the crew remained focused on the goal ahead. As the months passed, Putnam and Fabio shared their determination with the rest of the crew, inspiring them to stay united and not lose hope.

But as time passed, nearing a year of sailing, provisions began to run low, and the crew's morale was inevitably affected. However, at the last moment, just when a mutiny was about to erupt, Putnam found a glimmer of hope on the horizon. They finally spotted land, an unknown island that could hold the key to the success of their expedition if it wasn't a mirage. This island turned out to be none other than Hawaiki of the [Silk Islands](#). Excitement filled the air as the ships headed towards the shore, hearts brimming with anticipation and determination. In just a few hours, it would all be over. Fabio had been right – beyond the continent lay a world waiting to be discovered and explored.

Unfortunately, just as they were finally approaching the land in a calm and composed manner after almost a year of journeying, a sudden and unexpected storm caught them off guard. It caused the ships to run aground on the coast of Hawaiki, leaving them stranded there, at least for what seemed like a lengthy period of time, if not forever.

The four years in the Silk Islands ✨

By the time they awoke on the shore, battered and scattered, they could observe the wreckage of the ships. They realized that even if engineers and builders had come (ironically, as a precaution for the possibility of having to stay in their newfound land for a while, Fabio had been wise in that regard), it would take a long time to repair them. They were forced, without a doubt, to explore the island and survive. And so it was, they had to spend four long years on the main of the [Silk Islands](#) before they could return home. This marked the beginning shortly after, of the first contacts between the natives and the Nordlings.

These initial encounters were almost deadly. In a curious way, they echoed how the Nordlings had received the elves and other non-humans upon arriving to colonize The Continent back in the day, but in reverse. Whenever they attempted to engage in conversation with the natives they came across, the kindest response they received was a barrage of stones, spears, or arrows – somewhat

reminiscent to several members of the expedition, such as Istredd, Eberhart, Fabio, and Putnam, to a certain encounter in the Far North, but without the aid of Vallaryel to serve as a bridge between both worlds. In fact, on more than one occasion, the arrows found their mark, though fortunately, without any fatalities.

They settled along the coast, constructing the settlement that would later become the capital of Hawaiki, Elmia, named in honor of the man who would eventually be known as [Saint Elmo](#). He had ensured under his guidance that the ships didn't fare worse despite the storm, and he was the first to show the initiative to survive and explore in order to return home as soon as possible, when everyone else was demoralized.

It wouldn't be until some of the aforementioned arrows from the natives inflicted seemingly harmless impacts on members like Putnam, Fabio, Elmo, Eberhatt, and other expedition members, that the dynamics between nordlings and natives began to change for the better. And it was all thanks to Istredd and his concern for his friends and the rest of the expedition members. It turned out that these arrows were coated with a slow-acting indigenous poison that posed a lethal threat to those injured. Even for Putnam, who had the advantage of his witcher biology, things looked grim (though he would eventually assimilate and adapt to the poison, recovering as expected, but nobody could have foreseen this at that time given his condition).

Amid the growing concern over the effects of the indigenous poison on the injured, Istredd, driven by desperation and the desire to save his companions, decided to commit an act of recklessness. He chose to seek help from the natives in finding a cure. He knew that it was highly likely they would attempt to kill him, but he had no other option. Trying to haphazardly mix unknown plants in an attempt to find an antidote on his own would be foolish and could even be considered involuntary manslaughter depending on how one looked at it.

The only thing he knew was that they didn't understand Common. Relying on his extensive knowledge of languages, he attempted to use the Elder Speech to see if it might somehow open channels of communication. He was met with a barrage of arrows, barely able to utter a word. It wasn't until he recited a spell in the Elder Speech to protect himself that the attacks ceased and the natives looked at him curiously. Not because of the magic he had used, as they had their equivalent of mages and druids called a "ruānuku," but because of the language he had employed, which seemed both familiar and strange to them, since they spoke a distant dialect of the Elder Speech.

Using the power of the spell, Istredd successfully quelled the barrage of arrows from the natives and seized their attention. As the tension in the air eased, Istredd initiated a form of communication through a combination of gestures and sporadic words. His objective was to build a bridge of mutual comprehension, transcending the linguistic barrier that had initially divided them.

Despite the formidable obstacles at the outset, Istredd's persistence began to bear fruit. Slowly but surely, he managed to convey his purpose, earnestly expressing that neither he nor his companions were monsters; rather, they were individuals much like the natives themselves, with their own feelings, dreams, and aspirations. With a mix of carefully chosen words and heartfelt gestures, he conveyed his quest to find a remedy for the venomous effects of the arrows that had harmed his wounded friends and allies during the last attack. He emphasized that his goal was to prevent their deaths, as he held a deep respect and affection for them. In addition, he touched upon various other topics, seeking to establish common ground and a foundation of mutual understanding.

The natives, cautious yet intrigued by this outsider who seemed to speak in a language that was both familiar and strange, began to observe his actions with more curiosity than hostility. As Istredd demonstrated his unwavering

determination, empathy, and eagerness to comprehend them, some of them started to embrace his presence and even apologize for their last attack. Concurrently, they cooperated in his quest to find a solution for the poison. It's worth noting that initially, these individuals were few in number, but their ranks grew as the mage's benevolence became increasingly evident to them.

As Istredd persisted in his efforts to bridge the gap between their cultures, his actions spoke volumes about his intentions. The barriers that had once separated them began to crumble, replaced by a shared sense of purpose and mutual understanding. Gradually, more of the natives came to recognize the authenticity of his mission and the sincerity of his desire to aid his friends and allies.

Through persistence and empathy, Istredd not only diffused the hostility that had marred their initial interactions but also forged a connection that transcended language and cultural differences. His willingness to engage with them on their own terms, coupled with his dedication to finding a remedy for the venom, ultimately swayed the majority of the natives.

It was a slow and delicate process, marked by frustrated attempts at communication and misunderstandings. However, as already mentioned, gradually, Istredd and the natives began to collaborate, and their cooperation improved over time. Eventually, they found an antidote when Istredd visited the local ruānuku after one of the natives suggested it. The mage swiftly applied it to save all the wounded individuals (with the exception of Putnam, who had healed on his own due to his witcher nature, developing future immunity).

The journey from initial hostility to successful collaboration was characterized by the perseverance of Istredd and the natives. Despite the language barriers and cultural differences, they managed to bridge the gap through shared goals and a mutual desire for the well-being of their companions. Through trial and error, they developed effective means of early communication, using gestures, simple words, and even the universal language of empathy until Istredd developed a dictionary of the language during those four years.

As the partnership flourished, it became evident that both sides were motivated by the same fundamental values: the preservation of life and the fostering of understanding. Istredd's determination to save his friends and allies, coupled with the natives' willingness to set aside their initial suspicions after witnessing the mage's goodness, laid the foundation for a harmonious relationship based on mutual respect during that period.

The first year was the toughest. Not only due to the initial conflicts with the natives and the longing for Nordling lands, but also the adaptation to an unfamiliar, hostile, and wild environment while they work on repairing the ships completely. A considerable part of the expedition ended up dying from various tropical diseases. Despite this, with Istredd's help in establishing a relationship of mutual respect with the natives, and as they gradually interacted more with their "new neighbors," things started to change. There were casualties among the Silk Islanders as well, since the Nordlings had brought diseases to which they had no immunity. However, the magic and knowledge (likely of elven origin due to the dialect they spoke) of the local ruānuku prevented further deaths among them.

It must be said, that none of them saw that as a punishment from the gods in the case of the Nordlings, and in the case of the Silk Islanders from Paparuda for interacting, but as a trial set, at least in the case of the Silk Islanders by the rival of their deity Paparuda, Martolea, who was believed to have "taken away" the tapairus from them in the past (the name by which they referred to the elves that arrived at the Silk Islands after one of their colony white ships deviated from its course toward The Continent and reached the islands) Overcoming these challenges was considered by the most religious individuals in both groups as a way to demonstrate their worthiness for deeper mutual understanding and

interaction.

The second year proved to be better. The surviving Nordlings learned to adapt and make the most of what the island had to offer, thanks to both their ingenuity and the assistance of the natives. The latter guided them in various matters, such as hunting animals, cooking, using plants, and many more aspects. All of this took place in Elmia, as the settlement had evolved by that year into a hub of trade and cultural exchange between the two groups through barter. The Silk Islanders offered their aid and knowledge, and in return, the Nordlings provided products salvaged from the ships that intrigued the Silk Islanders.

This second year, out of the four that occurred, would also be one of the best for a simple reason. Many Nordlings who came on the expedition ended up forming relationships with native women (primarily those who were widowed due to their partners falling victim to attacks by the orange dragons). This, to a considerable extent, alleviated the loneliness and uncertainty they felt. In fact, it gave them a sense of home when the first mixed-race children began to be born shortly thereafter.

And why were the Silk Islands named as such? The reason is rather simple: the Silk Islanders were far from being a backward people. A prime example of their sophistication was evident in their clothing, which showcased their departure of all the tribal clichés that you could imagine. Their clothing varied in length based on the season, with longer garments worn during the monsoon season to shield against humidity brought by the intense rains.

What's particularly intriguing is that these garments were crafted from a type of native silk worm thriving on the islands. However, their utilization of these silk worms extended beyond clothing; they also harnessed them for other purposes, such as dyeing their clothes with a spectrum of colors. This was achieved by collecting the "saliva" that these silk worms secreted in different colors, which served as a form of communication among the worms themselves.

Consequently, the name "Silk Islands" emerged, encapsulating the islands' intricate relationship with these silk worms and the culture of the Silk Islanders themselves.

The civilization of the Silk Islanders, in comparison to that of the Nordlings, was considered primitive in some aspects while advanced in others. Due to the lack of mineral deposits, for example, they didn't possess steel swords and had to rely on obsidian extracted from volcanoes. These obsidian blades were then enchanted by a ruānuku to enhance their durability. Additionally, they didn't have a monetary system and relied on barter for trade.

However, in contrast to these limitations, much like the Aen Seidhe did in the Northern Kingdoms, the Silk Islanders boasted beautiful cities that were fully integrated with nature. These cities were either inherited from the "tapairus" or built by them; their origins remained a mystery. Unlike the elven cities that were destroyed during Nordling colonization, these cities were gradually fused with the structures constructed by the Nordling and Dwarven settlers over time, as colonization began. This merging process resulted in a strikingly syncretic urban landscape, reminiscent of the one found in the Nilfgaardian city of Baccalà who mixed Barsaman and Nilfgaardian architecture, for example.

On the other hand, while they lacked the advanced navigation knowledge required to cross an entire ocean, they did possess the skills necessary to navigate between the islands and engage with other Silk Islanders living on them. Moreover, when sea conditions were favorable, they could venture to the Western Continent, which remained visible from Hawaiki on clear days without requiring telescopes due to its close proximity. During these visits, they would fish in the coastal waters, catching species of fish that were absent from the islands. These

unique catches were then utilized for various purposes, showcasing the resourcefulness of the Silk Islanders.

In the second year of their stay, the Silk Islanders revealed the existence of a new continent to the Nordlings on a clear day while they were teaching the Nordlings about their fishing techniques, sparking Fabio's motivation to explore it alongside the remaining members of the expedition once both ships had been fully repaired. Tragically, during their first exploration of the Western Continent in the fourth year, Fabio and his companions succumbed to a mysterious illness after reaching what would later be known as Fabio's Cape. Simultaneously, the other half of the expedition, equipped with one of the repaired ships, returned to the Northern Kingdoms to share news of this groundbreaking discovery.

Despite Putnam's strong desire to accompany his friend on the exploration, Fabio directed him to join the latter group. Putnam's responsibility was to ensure their safety during the journey back, protecting them from potential sea monsters that might be encountered in the Great Sea, just as he did on their journey to the islands.

The third year of the expedition living in Hawaiki was the most easygoing. While they continued to repair the ships with the surviving specialists who had overcome tropical diseases and the assistance of Silk Islanders from both Hawaiki and other islands—skilled sailors who knew which woods to use for repairing the ships, based on the ones they used for crafting their boats—many unconsciously started to assume they would stay there. This sentiment was especially noticeable among those who had started families with the native women, as they began to consider it better to raise their children on the island.

The fourth year, initially, was similar to the third, until the ships were repaired and farewells had to be exchanged, along with the decision-making by those who had formed families in Hawaiki. Whether to stay or to leave. The final decision was to depart with their families and settle in realms like Cidarís, where due to trade, there were more foreign people and individuals of mixed origins. This choice aimed to avoid, as much as possible, the typical discrimination prevalent in the Nordling mentality. In fact, it was thanks to this action that word about the existence of the Silk Islands and the Western Continent began to spread among the common people. Initially, as rumors and tales of adventures in distant lands, and later as truth when the Nilfgaardian Empire confirmed their existence, discovered a route that took not nearly a year, but a month and a half, and subsequently initiated the colonization of the Western Continent at the end of the century.

This information would also reach the Nordling monarchies through Anika, once she reunited again with Putnam. However, much like the common folk, the monarchs didn't pay it much heed, dismissing it as mere folktales and exaggerations made by the returning expeditionaries from the islands until the threat of an even greater expansion by Nilfgaard, with an entire new continent at its disposal, rich in resources, became evident.

As an interesting fact, due to this new route discovered by the sailors of the Nilfgaardian Empire, the island of Basilia would be annexed to the empire. Thus, it became the first Oversea Province (since Sabana, as such, was a Nilfgaardian colony using Cintra as a proxy).

The Last Embrace with Putnam 💎

"Don't do anything reckless if you don't have Eberhatt watching your back, got it?"

—Putnam's last words to Fabio Sachs

The farewell with Fabio (and also Istredd and Eberhatt), like all farewells, was tough. There were emotional tears and hugs from both those who would continue

exploring and those who were leaving. In Putnam's case, the farewell was not only due to concerns for Fabio's safety (to which Fabio assured him that Istredd and Eberhatt were there to protect him and the rest of the expedition members with him), but also because he felt he was not fulfilling the promise he had made to himself to stay with the explorer until the end.

However, the weight of this feeling was lifted by the explorer himself, who reassured Putnam that protecting the other expedition members as they returned to the Northern Kingdoms was akin to protecting him as well. While not entirely convinced, Putnam accepted this perspective and joined the others on their journey back. Unbeknownst to him, his best friend would soon succumb to a mysterious tropical illness, becoming the final member of that initial Nordling expedition to the Western Continent to pass away.

Personality

Fabio Sachs embodied a unique blend of resilience, compassion, determination, intellectual curiosity, and vulnerability. His deep compassion and unwavering loyalty to his friends often led him to prioritize their well-being over his own, reflecting a selfless and caring nature. Fueled by an adventurous spirit and intellectual curiosity, Fabio pursued ambitious goals in many aspects, propelling himself towards new horizons and daring expeditions both literally and metaphorically.

One notable demonstration of Fabio's resilience and determination occurred in the already mentioned, year of 1280, during his relentless search, alongside others, for his kidnapped best friend Putnam Pitch. This period underscored his strong will and tenacity, defining his character as protective and willing to sacrifice his safety for others, embodying the values of a true friend and leader.

Fabio approached challenges with rationality, forgiving others and acting honorably even amid personal conflicts, revealing a balanced and thoughtful nature. His empathy and intuitive understanding of others facilitated personal growth and openness to change in his interactions. Fabio's ability to adapt to shifting circumstances and balance immediate responsibilities with long-term goals showcased a strategic and forward-thinking mindset. He continually sought emotional maturity and deeper understanding within his relationships, demonstrating a capacity for reflection and personal growth.

However, Fabio's ambition sometimes led to overcommitment and self-neglect, compounded by a struggle with perfectionism and disappointment when he fell short. While capable of forming deep emotional connections, he could also become solitary, especially during intense scholarly pursuits, contrasting with his typically outgoing demeanor. Despite his leadership abilities, Fabio occasionally doubted his decisions and took calculated risks, viewing failures as opportunities for learning. His intellectual curiosity occasionally resulted in overconfidence, causing him to overlook practical considerations and rush into decisions without fully assessing the consequences. Fabio's idealism about the impact of his work in the future, occasionally clashed with practical realities, leading to frustration, disillusionment, and a tendency to avoid confrontations or uncomfortable discussions.

Legacy

Fabio Sachs' legacy is profound and multifaceted, encompassing his contributions to exploration, cartography, and intercultural understanding. His expeditions to the Far East and Far North significantly expanded the known world for the Nordlings, dispelling myths and bringing detailed knowledge of previously mysterious regions. His work not only mapped these distant lands but also documented their cultures, bridging gaps between disparate peoples and fostering a greater sense of global interconnectedness.

The discovery of the Silk Islands and the Western Continent during his later years further cemented his reputation. These regions, which include the Nordling colonies collectively known as Fabiola, and the landmarks known as Fabio's Cape, and the Sachs Mountains, stand as enduring testaments to his exploratory zeal and skill. These two geographic features named in his honor ensure that his contributions are permanently etched into the world's map.

Sachs' meticulous documentation and cartography provided a foundation for future explorers and scholars, enabling further exploration and study. His maps, starting with his first major work on the Pontar Delta, Velen, Kaer Morhen valley, and Skellige, were critical in advancing geographic knowledge and facilitating subsequent journeys.

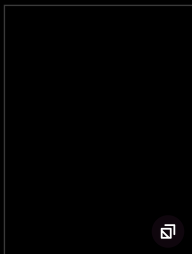
The friendships and connections he formed, particularly with notable figures like the mage Istredd and the Griffin Witcher later one of the founders of the School of the Crane, Putnam Pitch, highlight his ability to bridge diverse worlds, combining scholarly pursuits with practical exploration. This blend of theoretical knowledge and hands-on discovery set a new standard for explorers of his time.

Despite the tragic end of his last voyage, with Fabio succumbing to a mysterious illness on September 5, 1306, his legacy endures. His life's work inspired countless others to look beyond the horizon, challenging the unknown and expanding the boundaries of human understanding.

Image credits

- Fabio and Putnam in 1282 by Teradiam Art.
- Fabio Sachs and Putnam in 1302 by Pukeiart.

Gallery



Fabio Sachs signature in one of his maps

Categories

Community content is available under [CC-BY-SA](#) unless otherwise noted.

EXPLORE PROPERTIES

Fandom
Muthead
Fanatical

FOLLOW US



OVERVIEW

What is Fandom?
About
Careers
Press
Contact
Terms of Use
Privacy Policy
Digital Services Act
Global Sitemap
Local Sitemap

COMMUNITY

Community Central
Support
Help

FANDOM APPS

Take your favorite fandoms with you and never miss a beat.

ADVERTISE

Media Kit
Contact

The Witcher Fanon Wikia is a FANDOM Games Community.

VIEW MOBILE SITE